



Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey - Chicano Oral Histories 1983/146

Oral interview of
Guadalupe C. Aguilar

January 16 & 25, 1984

Conducted by Rosana Madrid

Transcribed by Lee Ann McMeans

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This is an interview done on Guadalupe C. Aguilar. Rosana Madrid is the interviewer. It was conducted on January 16, 1984, [continued on January 25, 1984] for the Ethnic Community Survey Project of the Sacramento History Center. Most of it is in English and there is a little bit of Spanish.

[Interview Begins Tape One]

Rosana: I want to ask you again to repeat your date of birth and your place of birth.

Sra. Aguilar: Oh, you are going to ask me?

Rosana: Sure, go, go ahead.

Sra. Aguilar: My date of birth August 3, 1907.

Rosana: And that was in San Antonio?

Sra. Aguilar: In San Antonio, Texas, on Sevilla St.

Rosana: Was there any special circumstances to when your Mom had you?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: There wasn't? You were what child were you, in what order?

Sra. Aguilar: I was the first child, I was the eldest child.

Rosana: And had they been married a long time before they had you?

Sra. Aguilar: A year and one month, I think. Yeah, because it was a year married in July and I was born in August.

Rosana: Uh huh, and were both of your parents, uh American Citizens or

Sra. Aguilar: Oh they were American born.

Rosana: And their parents?

Sra. Aguilar: My mother's parents were, but my father's parents were born in Saltillo, Mexico.

Rosana: Uh huh, your mother's parents were originally though, their parents were from?

Sra. Aguilar: Descended from, from El Culla del la Garza who came from the Canary Islands and settled there in San Antonio, five generations, when Texas belonged to Spain, her folks, her line of parentage or relatives were, came from the Canary Islands.

Rosana: Do you have any idea about what year?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh no, I think that was in the late 1700's or early 17, you know the 17th century, about then, because he was all through the time Texas belonged to Spain and then when Mexico became independent from Spain and all that became Mexican territory, uh he was they were all still there in Texas. So then they became Mexican citizens. So when Texas won its independence from Mexico, which he and all of his children helped fight for Mexican Independence that's what that is, helped fight for Mexican or Texas Independence and they were fighting for Texas Independence for no other reason that they couldn't progress while they were Mexican citizens. If you wanted to do anything, you know, to progress, they had to ask permission to Mexico and it would be months maybe years before they would get an answer. So then they all got together, all the Texans, and these were people from Tennessee, from Alabama, and people that came from the Canary Islands. They got all together, Spaniards and Anglos, uh, they all came back together and started to uh, figure, and thinking about being independent from Mexico in order to form their own government and keep, you know, progress. So that's when Texas won its independence from Mexico, in 1836. And that's when we had the Lone Star State. The Texas flag. And then Texas won, so we became Texans, we weren't Mexican citizens or Spaniard citizens or any kind of citizens, we were Texans. So then, uh Texas entered the Union and we had the American flag. So then the Civil War came and Texans uh, how do you say, succeeded from the Union and entered with the Confederate, and we had the Confederate state, the flag. That's why it has been under so many flags, you see, the Spanish flag, the Mexican flag, the Lone Star State flag, and then the Confederate flag, and then the American flag.

Rosana: Ok, we are going to jump the gun, but we will get back to where we are at.

Sra. Aguilar: All right.

Rosana: You mentioned before that you, that one of your uncles had fought for the South in the Civil War?

Sra. Aguilar: Not for the South, in the North.

Rosana: They fought in the North? Now what uncle was that?

Sra. Aguilar: Blaise Mullian. Yeah, one of my uncles when Texas succeeded from the Union to join the Confederates, he left Texas and came through to the West Coast and somewhere along here in the West Coast he joined the Union to fight in the Union Army, against the Confederates.

Rosana: And was there any family conflict that he was fighting for the North while Texas was under the Confederate flag?

Sra. Aguilar: Any family what?

Rosana: Conflict.

Sra. Aguilar: No, no, they were all in accord with him because they all were against slavery.

Rosana: I see.

Sra. Aguilar: They were all against slavery, and they all agreed with him and he came to the West Coast and went up and somewhere along the West Coast he joined the Union Army and he was a bugler for the Union Army. We still have his discharge from the Union Army in our family, but somehow it got lost.

Rosana: Uh huh, ok, but let's get back to your family background. Now what did your father do?

Sra. Aguilar: He worked for the railroad. He went to school, he worked for the Traction company for you know they were just putting the street cars in San Antonio, he was a motor man. When they were just putting the street cars in San Antonio. And then he went to work for the San Antonio Aransas Pass Railroad

Rosana: San Antonio what?

Sra. Aguilar: Aransas Pass Railroad as a blacksmith helper. And he worked there 17 years.

Rosana: I should ask you what other brothers and sisters you had. If you were the first born, who followed you?

Sra. Aguilar: Graicella or Grace, and then Antonia, and then Joseph.

Rosana: And your parents decided to stop having children after that or?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, because my mother was sick and the doctor said that she shouldn't have any more children. Well she had others, but they were miscarriages or they died at birth. She had the stillborn. The doctor then told my father she shouldn't have any more children. So I don't know what he did, because he didn't operate on her. This was way, when there were no such things as hysterectomy or things like that. So I don't know what the doctor did.

Rosana: So your mother had a doctor and not a midwife?

Sra. Aguilar: No, for me she had, I think she had a midwife for me, and I don't remember for my sister, but for my brother and sister, she had a doctor.

Rosana: And the doctor was a Mexican doctor or an Anglo doctor?

Sra. Aguilar: No, he was Anglo.

Rosana: So your mother spoke English? Both of your parents?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, she spoke English. Can I record this?

Rosana: Record anything you want. Anything that will make you feel comfortable.

Sra. Aguilar: All right. You see my mother was born in Texas, five generations back. I think they were all born in Texas and they couldn't speak English, only Spanish, the Spanish from Spain. And, so when and they all intermarried there into the settlers there. But my mother, thought she would get out of that idea of intermarrying into all the same people. And she married my father whose parents came from Mexico. His mother was Aztec Indian and his father was full-blooded Spaniard, blue eyes, blond hair, and real fair. And my grandmother was bronze looking with straight black hair and dark. And they had two children. My aunt who was six years older than my father and was fair, with auburn hair, grey blue eyes and very fair. And my father was all the opposite. Dark, black wavy hair and tall like his father, my aunt was short like his, her mother. And so when she met my father, she I guess she fell in love with him and he was educated in English and Spanish because his folks, his parents spoke Spanish and they taught him Spanish and he learned English at school. So he spoke the two languages fluently. So when he married my mother, when my mother got married, her folks did not want her to marry him, because he was dark! See. But my mother said that she didn't care, that she loved him and his color didn't have anything to do with it. She loved him and she was going to marry him. So she married him. And when they got married my father started teaching her English and she said she didn't want to speak that dog language. And he said why? And she said "because they stole all of our land, all of the land that was given to us and everything that was given to us here in Texas, from the government of Spain, they stole it and that is why I don't want to speak the English language." So my father told her:

Well that's water under the bridge, and you are going to learn how to speak English so you can, because we are going to start having children and I want them to learn English so that by the time they go to school, start school, they can understand the language so they can know what the teacher is instructing them so they can get ahead in the English language. We are in a country where the English language is spoken and they have to learn how to speak English, so you have to learn how to speak English also, so that you can understand them. If you're folks had tried to learn how to speak English, read and write in English, that wouldn't have happened.

Cause you see, my mother's grandfather, he gambled a lot. And uh, he went and gambled and then he came to his father who was the Cura, and he told him that he owed a lot of money, that he had gambled and he did not have the money with what to pay it. So the Cura said uh, borrow some money on the library room, he had a big building in the front of the court house there in San Antonio and it was all nothing but books and they call it El Cuarto dela Libriadia. You see? So my grandfather, not my grandfather, but my great-great-grandfather, went to borrow the money on that room. But the people that were you know, the loan sharks, they didn't put down El Cuarto dela Libriadia, they put down, you see blocks, street blocks or land blocks, are in Spanish sound almost the same as cuarto, block is cuadra and cuarto is a room. So they didn't put cuarto, they put cuadras, so many cuadras, so when the mortgage was due, my great-grandfather went to his father and told him uh, well the mortgage is due. He said "well I don't have the money to give to you right know, let it go and it was only the library room and let it go" and so he let it go, didn't pay it. And so when they went to do something about the land, they find out it isn't theirs. That they had lost it in that mortgage. And then they said we didn't mortgage the land we mortgaged the library room, so but no, here it's the land. So they took about 10 or 15 blocks. Have you heard in the magazines Jasques of Texas? It is advertised in

some of the magazines? Well from the, the land right across from the court house in San Antonio, Texas, all the way where Jasques is built now, belonged to the Cura de la Garza. It was a grant from the government of Spain. And they lost all of that land, and they had just another part of land that they owned, it was farm land. That was all that was left to them. Because they stole it, and that's what my mother was referring to when my father told her that she had to learn how to speak English.

Rosana: So did your father finally get your mother to learn English?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh, yes, yes he did. He got her to learn English, and even her sisters, they did not know how to speak English either. Which one is still living, my Aunt Angelina, she is 87 years old.

Rosana: And did all of, did you and your brothers and sisters learn both English and Spanish?

Sra Aguilar: And Spanish, when we came here we were speaking English and Spanish.

Rosana: You mentioned before that you went to school. Did you go to school there in Texas?

Sra Aguilar: Yes.

Rosana: Were you educated in both English and Spanish?

Sra Aguilar: No, I was educated only in English in school. The Spanish, my father taught it to us.

Rosana: Was there any problems with being Mexican and going to school there?

Sra Aguilar: No, not in San Antonio, in other parts of Texas there is, but not in San Antonio. The Mexican population there is very large, it is just like being in Mexico. It is only a few miles there, like from here to Roseville to get to Mexico.

Rosana: So did you go to public school?

Sra. Aguilar: No, my father always sent us to parochial school. I went to St. Phillip of Jesus School, there in San Antonio, Texas. And when I graduated from grade school, I went to the Ursalines' Academy, there in San Antonio. I attended the Ursalines' Academy. I didn't graduate because I took sick.

Rosana: Were you a sickly child?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, I was uh kind of sickly, I don't know. I don't know why, well I think the reason was because I, because my mother was always sick, and I used to get home and do those chores in the house and everything, and then uh, supper time came, but as soon as I got through with my chores, I went to study my lessons and do my homework, because I didn't want to be last in the class. I wanted to be up there, you know? And I was an ambitious student. And uh,

so I would go to study and do my homework, and then they called me to eat supper and I would say just a minute, I want to finish here, and I want to finish here. Then by the time I would get through doing my homework, and all of that, and I would go to eat and the food would be cold. And nobody around, my mother and father had gone to the living room or outside or something and I didn't care to at that time, gas didn't go through those streets, we had to use wood, and we had the wood stove and I didn't care to heat it up. And I wouldn't eat. I would eat just a few things or pick on the food and I wouldn't eat and I would go back to my studies and I would stay up until 12:00 or 1:00 a.m. doing my homework and studies, because the sisters could get every, every subject we would have to do homework and studies. It was real hard at that time. And uh, so eventually, I got sick from not being well nourished. And in the morning, from not getting enough sleep, I would oversleep and I would get up in a hurry and get ready to go to school, and I would just drink a glass of milk and run to school, and that was all.

Rosana: So all of you, and all of your brothers and sisters attended Catholic school?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes.

Rosana: Was that a far distance from where you lived?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, I think it was, we used to walk to school, but it was kind of far, it was about oh about I don't know, it must have been about 12 or 15 blocks.

Rosana: And when you finished, when you finally stopped going to the Academy, did you start working?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, I started working, I got sick first, you see. Because I got sick and my father took me to the doctor. And the doctor told him well you, is that all being recorded?

Rosana: Yes, it is.

Sra. Aguilar: Are, we didn't record the rest?

Rosana: Yes we did.

Sra. Aguilar: Oh. My father said, the doctor told my father, what do you want for your daughter? Her education or her school. My father said I'd like to have both. The doctor said you can't you have to have one. My father said her health. The doctor said he had to take her out of school. And he had me resting for a long time and on medication and things like that and uh nourishing food. And so, I got well, I got better. And then I went to work. The first time I worked in the first supermarket was a Chinese market in San Antonio, Texas. I worked in the fruit stand, selling fruit. Vegetables and fruit and all of that. They had just like a supermarket. I worked there for about a year, and then I went to work for a loan company. The Pay Loan Company there in San Antonio. I worked there for two years until I got married. After I got married, I worked for about two years for the Federal Clothing Store, as a bookkeeper.

Rosana: Was there any opposition in your family for you first working at the Chinese store, either because it was a job out of the house or ?

Sra. Aguilar: Well at first there was because I had, you know I wanted to go out and work and at that time, they weren't too keen about letting girls go out and work.

Rosana: How old were you?

Sra. Aguilar: I was sixteen. I was almost seventeen. But I convinced my father and mother, and they let me go to work.

Rosana: How did you convince them?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh, well I was telling them that we weren't in the old ages, and old times, and that girls were getting educated more because I had read up on this. Girls were getting educated more now, and to be able to get out into the world and look after themselves. If I didn't get the experience, then I didn't know, say suppose I marry some day and suppose my husband dies? Or something happens to him. And I have children, how am I going to work if I don't have the experience to work? To support myself and my children. You're not going to live forever, I told my father, because he thinks he would take care of us. See. That's what my father thought, he was a very, he was a great man. I used to call him the Prince of Fathers. So finally he gave in and let me go to work.

Rosana: And your mom? Did she have a big say?

Sra. Aguilar: No, she did what ever my father, my father was the boss. Whatever he said was.

Rosana: Did they have any problem with you working in a Chinese market?

Sra. Aguilar: No, no, because it was a nice place. It was a real nice, new building. They had the meat market, and the fruit stand and the store. Just like a supermarket. And nothing, it was in the best part of town. You see in San Antonio, the west side is where all the Mexican people, and then the east side is where the Black people, the middle is mixed, kind of mixed – but no Blacks, the Blacks stayed in the east side. They used to. And we go in the middle, in south San Antonio, the south part of San Antonio, close to town to the center of San Antonio, and so this store was on Alamo St. This street starts right in front of the Alamo, and it was called Alamo St. And it was close to my home, we lived close to Alamo St. And nothing but German, and Jewish people, rich people lived around it. That's all the people that came to the store. So there I learned how to speak German. You see, I could speak a little German, I don't remember much now, but my father could speak German fluently. He could speak German, Spanish, and English.

Rosana: How did your father manage to learn German?

Sra. Aguilar: Because he was raised among German kids there in Texas, there in San Antonio. When his father was working on the railroad tracks. He worked on the railroad tracks and he also worked for John Nance Gardner, the one that was Vice President to Franklin Roosevelt, his

first term. My grandfather worked for him. He was a, he used to break horses, on his farm, on his ranch. My grandpa, my father's father.

Rosana: So when you were growing up, was your family considered, uh middle class, or were you doing better than that?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, we didn't have nothing like that at that time. But, we were considered, you know of the best families, working families, but the best families there in San Antonio. Not of the lower classes, they are a lower class of people there. But they all live there in the west side.

Rosana: Did your family move from city to city?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: Or were you stationary?

Sra. Aguilar: No, that's what I couldn't understand, people moving around so much. No I was born on Sevilla St. See my grandfather came from Sao Tio, Mexico, that was my father's father and mother. They moved from Perenes Negros I think it was. They came into, to uh Del Rio, Texas, because my grandfather, my grandmother was pregnant with my father. My grandfather wanted my father to be born on American soil so he could have a better chance than what the poor people in Mexico had. That's why he moved into Texas. At that time, that was in 1886, 87, and he moved into Texas, you didn't have to pay no tariff or nothing, you just have to walk

over. You didn't have to pay nothing at the border. And so he moved into Del Rio, Texas, so my father was born on American soil, so he could have a better chance than what they had over there. And then when my father was six months old, they moved to San Antonio. And my grandfather, not San Antonio, but Leone, Texas, and he worked for John Nance Gardner, he was living somewhere around there, and then he went to work for the railroad on the track for the, to lay the rails and all of that, he went to work for that. And then, my father was about seven or eight months old when they moved to San Antonio. He bought a lot on Savilla Street, and then he went and bought, do you know those houses that they used to have? Where the carriages that carried people – Stagecoaches, used to stop, you know the houses that were built for these people to, these coaches used to stop? Well, my grandfather bought two of them, they were doing away with them because the train had come, the railroad had come in, and the, no the street car was not being built yet. The railroad had come in, so they did not need the coaches anymore, so they were abandoning these stage stations they called them so my grandfather bought two of them and moved them to this empty lot and fixed them up for their home. For his and my grandmother's home. So my father grew there. He was raised in this home. So when my father grew up and got married, they moved this old house to the back of the yard because it was a deep yard, they moved it to the back of the yard, my grandfather worked for the slaughterhouse, to the back of the yard and they gave it to my father for him to live there after he got married and they built a new house for themselves. A brand new house for themselves. My father lived there, in the back of the yard and that's where I was born and my sister, Grace was born. Then my father bought a lot on Simon Street. It was two streets over from where my grandfather lived. It was Savilla, then Lourdes Lane and then Simon. It was Ripps at the time, Ripps Street. So they

moved this little old house, they moved it up to Simon Street, to Ripps Street. I remember very well when they moved it. Oh, I was all excited. They took it to Ripps Street.

Rosana: What year was that? How old were you?

Sra. Aguilar: I was about eleven years old. Ten or eleven years old when my father moved this house over there. So we stayed in that house, my brother, Joe, and my sister, Toni, were born in that house. We were the first ones to have a telephone in, in that old house. We were the first ones to have electricity, and when they started putting the gas in, we were the first ones to have the gas in, through my mother. My mother was, did all of this, she went around taking applications from the different neighbors and so, and take them to the companies you know, to see that they put these things, and they did, they put that through her. She was the one that was active in that. When I went back to San Antonio, these people that lived there still remembered her. She said: "Lupe, if it hadn't been for Adela, we wouldn't have nothing like this here."

Rosana: So you lived in that one house in Ripp Street, or on Simon Street.

Sra. Aguilar: Well on Simon Street. Well, when we were growing up, my sister and I, we were becoming young ladies, my father had that house torn down and built a big new house, a big thing, new house. The lumber of that old house, because over there the houses have two walls, the outside wall and the inside wall because they are out of lumber. They are not like these, some of them are but some of them aren't. The lumber from the old house they used it for the inside wall of the new house. Because that was still good lumber. It was such good lumber.

They, he built that new house. That's the house I was married in, and my sister was married in, oh my three sisters here.

Rosana: So tell me about your marriage, that happened before you moved to Sacramento?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh yes! Way before my four children were born. Well, I met my husband, I met him in Floresville, Texas. My father, every year he sent us on vacation to Floresville, or my grandfather's farm for a vacation. This time we were in Floresville. Now a lot of my relatives were sheriffs and big things in Floresville, Texas. The Jimenez people.

Rosana: Flores, like Flores the last name?

Sra. Aguilar: Floresville ville. See the Jimenez was also there in the Alamo. So we went to Floresville with, to stay with my uncle. I was just fourteen years old.

Rosana: So you were fourteen years old?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, and my uncle was in charge of the celebration of the 16th of September. He was taking charge, and the Mexican people didn't have any place where to celebrate. The Germans had a big hall there. But they wouldn't let the Mexican people there use it. See, but my uncle, they had a lot of respect for my uncle. He was head of their, head of the community there. So they let him have the hall and the grounds to celebrate the 16th of September. So they celebrated it, and he took the orchestra from San Antonio to Floresville to go and play. My

husband, he had been in the Army towards the end of World War I, he had been in the Army. So this orchestra that my uncle hired to go to play in Floresville, was composed of kids that had been in the Army and had gotten discharged when reduction of the Armed Forces, after World War I, and they formed this orchestra and my husband was playing in it. They were all Anglos, my husband was the only Mexican. That's where he saw me, because I didn't pay no attention to him. I was just fourteen, playing, jumping around on the benches. But he saw me, I had my hair fixed up like this and a big braid here with a red ribbon over here and I had those, at that time we were, the style was for girls, blue serge skirts with big pleats, box pleats and midi blouse, navy midi blouse. That's what the style for girls wearing those years and Baby Jane slippers. That's how I was dressed. But I was jumping on the benches. My sister, Grace, she was boy crazy, and as soon as she saw my husband over there with the other, boys in the orchestra, she ran over there to talk to him and she was only eleven, twelve. She ran over there to talk to him. He asked her, that who was I? She said "oh, that's my sister, Lupe." He asked her for my full name and my address. She said "no, I can't give you her address, she'll get mad, if I give you her address." Anyway, that's where I met him. Then, he would write to me, but I never would answer his letters, I was afraid of my father. One year, three years passed, and I stopped writing to him because my father made me stop writing, because he caught one of the letters, and he said, "What do you want, boyfriend or your education?" I said "my education." He said "all right, you sit down and you write to this boy, and tell him you can't have no dates with him or nothing like that." I saw him only once and I didn't even talk to him. So anyway, three years passed. My father said "you can't go steady or have any boyfriends until you are seventeen. I don't want to know anything, and when you do, you are going to bring them here to the house, you are not going to stand on the street with them." I said, "ok." The day I was seventeen, my father told

my mother to get the girls ready, my sister too, because she was more ahead of me in boy crazy, you know. He said “get the girls ready and take them to the dance at Woodlawn Lake.” Because my father used get club invitations, he wouldn’t take us to no public dances. Just to club dances. He said “take the girls, it’s Lupe’s birthday, her seventeenth birthday, so take her, take them to the dance there.” The Woodlawn Lake was a big lake. At the end of the lake there is, was a big platform where they made dances. The clubs, you know, there were different clubs to make dances. Because there was a lot of clubs of young people in San Antonio at that time. It was very nice. When I came here and didn’t find that well I was what’s wrong with these people? No clubs for the young people or nothing. Then there was boating and there was a tennis court. Everything you know there.

Rosana: Now, you ended up marrying your husband.

Sra. Aguilar: Three years later.

Rosana: In 1925.

Sra. Aguilar: No, I married him in 1928. In 1925 was when I met him. No, I met him in 1924. Let me see. In 1922 I think, or somewhere around there, when I was fourteen.

Rosana: You married him in 1928? Then there was, you and he lived in San Antonio until 1940.

Sra. Aguilar: He was sent out of Texas in 1941, when Pearl Harbor. The next day, because you see he was out of the Army already, and he worked in the theaters there in San Antonio. He was a musician, and he worked in the pit in the theaters. In the Aztec Theater, the Texas, the Majestic, and all those theaters he worked in the pit. He earned very good money. He used to make \$100 a week and \$100 a week at that time was a tremendous amount of money. Where other people, young men were earning just \$12 or \$15 a week. So anyway, we got married, and he bought a lot there close to my mother and built me a house when we were just married. He built me a brand new house and bought brand new furniture through all the house. Oh, I was very happy and contented. I loved my husband very much, there was another boy there that, his folks, they were from Mexico, but they came from the rich people of Mexico that ran out when there was some kind of disturbance over there, and came and settled there in San Antonio. He wanted to marry me. But, I don't know, he was younger than my husband, he was better looking than my husband, and he, they came from the cream of the crop as we used to say over there, but I don't know why, I didn't care for the boy. But I did love my husband, but one time, I got mad at my husband and threw everything at his face, and we went around three years and threw everything at his face and I said "I'm going to show him, he is not the only fish in the ocean!" I start going around with this boy. When my husband heard about it, then he went to my father and told him he wanted to get married. I hadn't even been talking to him for one month, and then he comes to me, to where I worked. I was working for the loan company as a bookkeeper, that to ask me to marry him. I told him "well we hadn't even talked to each other for a month, and you didn't have no business going to my father to ask him, that you wanted to marry me, when you don't even know if I want to marry you." He said, "Well I took a chance anyway, I know you want to marry me." But you see, I had already made up my mind, because this boy, he

had a brand new Chrysler that his father had given him for his birthday, I think it was his 20th birthday. He was a month younger than me. August, September, October, oh three months younger than me. His father had given him a Chrysler for his birthday and he would come to the place where I worked to talk to me and that used to bother me. I said “what does he want to come to where I work, Paulo never did come here when I was working, I used to say, you know. Then he always was coming there and he wanted to take me here and take me there, and I didn’t want to go with him.

Rosana: Now who was this boyfriend’s name?

Sra Aguilar: Mike Gonzales. He looked very much like, what’s his name, the Mexican actor, the one that died? Um, the singer the one that died?

Rosana: Llamas?

Sra Aguilar: No, no, no! The Mexican actor from Mexico, the old, old, old. Not Pedro Enfantes, the singer. Jorge Migreta.

Rosana: Oh.

Sra. Aguilar: Jorge Migreta. He looked very much like him. I said, “I do not like this man.” When I saw Paulo coming after not talking to him for a whole month, and I saw Paulo coming, whoops my heart went like that! Took a flip! Nope, I’m not marrying Mike. Because Mike had

asked me to marry him. I'm not marrying Mike, I'm marrying him, he's the one I should marry. And I married him.

Rosana: So then, you were married and he was a musician, and he provided well for you. Now what made you move to Sacramento?

Sra. Aguilar: Well you see, uh when the Depression hit us, the theaters were out, without any music. When the Depression hit us. He worked in everything and the hotels and radio stations he even traveled all the way to California, Cleveland, Ohio, everywhere, he traveled and they traveled in a bus. I've got the pictures, in a bus, trying to make a living. But they couldn't hardly make a living, they only had a lot of difficulties, see. So when he came back, I told him, "I don't want you to travel no more. I rather starve, than for you to travel any more." By this time I already had the two children, the boy, Paulo, the oldest, he was three years old when the girl, Alma, was born. Alma was five when Mary Louise was born. You see, but I only had Paulo and Alma at that time. He said "Well if I stay here we will starve." I said, "well, we'll starve together." I said "I rather live under a tree than for you to be traveling." I said "stay home, I don't want you to travel anymore." So he did. So, golly Moses, we didn't know what to do, sometimes just for the, I can think now, you know, of people going through hard times and all of that, and I can think of that time that we had, and we were, the ones that didn't come up with hard times right away after the Depression, because I had saved quite a bit of money while he was working. We were paying on our home, we had a home for a long time and my father provided very much. He had his home until the, until he came out here and sold it. So we weren't so bad off. But I didn't want to depend on my father or anybody else, and he didn't want

to either. So I used to plant vegetables in the back yard and we would have that, but my father would come over and he would see what we were eating and he would come home and bring me meat and eggs and bacon and things like that you know. So we weren't so bad off like other people, and they were forming a band in, with the Welfare Effort, relief they called it at that time, the relief, and they called it the W something. So I told him "why don't you join that band, maybe you will make a little money." He said, "No, I'm not going to be standing, waiting for a hand out." So then, well I don't know what he is going to do. So then he used to get up every morning real early in the morning, when he never got up early, you see his jobs were always at night, and he never got up early. At this time he used to get up real early in the morning and he didn't come back until late in the evening. I told him, "Well, Paulo, were do you spend all of the day?" I was beginning to get angry. "Where do you spend all of the day?" Paulo said, "Oh, never mind, I'll tell you about it later, and never mind I tell you about it later." So this was during the Depression, it was 1935, or 1934, when he went into the Army again. One day, he comes home dressed as a soldier, in uniform. I started to cry, because over there, the best families don't allow their daughters to marry soldiers, or anybody in the military. Oh that's not for them. I started to cry because he was dressed as a military. He said "what's the matter?" I said "Well what did you do?" He said "I went and joined the Army." "What for?" "Well, there's nothing to do on the outside, maybe I'll get something from the Army." I said "Paulo but that's not right" I started you know talking like all women. Then he said "no," he said "I'd rather do this than to stand in line for a handout. I don't want any handouts." And he was only getting \$21 dollars a month, and he kept going for such a long time, he said:

I went over there to Fort Sam Houston to try to join, and they are not taking married men in the service right now, but they needed a trumpet player in the band, so they asked permission to Washington for, if they could take me, since I was a married man and had two children. Since I had already a service record, and I had an honorable discharge, they admitted me, and I was lucky that they took me. So that's how come I joined the Army. Right now, I'll be getting \$21 a month, but after a while, when they get all of the records straightened out, I will be getting longevity pay, counting what I served during World War II, World War I, towards the end of World War I, and he said it would be a little bit more. Then if I do dance jobs, or anything weekends, I think we can make it.

I said, "well all right." So I pacified myself, and anyway he stayed in the Army, the next year he reenlisted because he liked the Army, and I liked it too. I liked him being in the Army. Then, we, that was in 1932 or, I mean 1934, Alma was already born. In 1934 when he joined the Army. Then in, BeBe, this one here was born in 1937 at Fort Sam Houston, the old hospital. Then David, my youngest son, was born in 1938 in the new hospital, the Brooks General Hospital, we were the first patients in that hospital, they weren't completely through with it, but we were the first patients in that hospital. He was born there, in the Brooks General Hospital. Then the, he transferred from the 23rd Infantry in Fort Sam Houston, to 69th Coast Artillery in Galveston. Oh, I didn't like that, I told him, because here they had offered to give him the Sergeant's rating and the band leader didn't give it to him, he gave it to another fellow, that hadn't deserved it. He wasn't entitled to it. So Paulo got mad and he transferred to the 69th Coast Artillery in Galveston, and there he did get his Sergeant's stripes. He was there at the 69th Coast Artillery in Galveston, when they were ordered to the, to the South Pacific. See, but instead, no they were ordered to the West Indies, to the West Indies, but then they cancelled the order, because they had, didn't have any facilities for the servicemen there. So they sent them to train the National Guard in Palacio, Texas. See? They were there, and he used to come at the end of the month, because we moved to Galveston, we sold our house and everything, and we

moved to Galveston, and then when they gave him this order, I moved back to San Antonio with my uncle. My father and mother were out here already. I moved to San Antonio with my uncle, and I stayed with them there until, to see what he was going to do, if they were going to send him or what. Well they cancelled the orders and they sent him to Palacio, Texas, to train the National Guard. He was there, when the Pearl Harbor attack, see? So then, they had already given them the orders to send them to the South Pacific, this time. The first it was the West Indies, then they were going to send them to the South Pacific. So he came home and I told him “well you are coming home early, what is the matter?” And he said “well we have the orders to go to the South Pacific.” I started, oh you know, “I told you that if anything went wrong you were the first ones to be ordered out to the war zone.” Because the 69th Coast Artillery was anti-aircraft. He said “well, that’s why I’m a soldier for.” He said, “if there is a job to do, you have to do it.” That’s what he told me. I started to cry and all of that, but that didn’t matter. Any way we were there when we went to my mother-in-law’s house to, he was going to tell her goodbye, when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. So you should have seen San Antonio that day. People didn’t want to volunteer for service. Well that day, everybody laid down everything, and they went to the recruiting stations. There were lines and lines of people joining up. The Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Air Force, everything. We have a lot of military.

Rosana: So your husband went to the war, to where, the South Pacific?

Sra. Aguilar: He was ordered to the South Pacific, the 69th Coast Artillery, but they got as far as San Diego and there, they stopped them because there was, it wasn’t safe to cross yet, because too many Japanese submarines were attacking out on the ocean. You know?

Rosana: And he left you behind?

Sra. Aguilar: He left me behind, he told me to come to stay with my mother and father here.

Rosana: So that's how you got to Sacramento. I see.

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, that's how I came to Sacramento, now because all of my folks were here already.

Rosana: Did your father come here because there was a job here? Or why Sacramento of all places?

Sra. Aguilar: Because I had an Aunt, my Aunt Ola, my mother's sister, who came here in 1924. Her husband, they were recruiting people for the canneries here. Her husband came in that recruit. He came over here and then he sent for her, in 1924. He sent for her. And gradually, she brought all of the family out here. Almost all of the family.

Rosana: So, where did you live when you first moved to Sacramento in 1942?

Sra. Aguilar: When what?

Rosana: When you first moved to Sacramento, you lived with your father?

Sra. Aguilar: No, no, I didn't live with my father, because my father was working at Mare Island in the Blacksmith shop, during the war he worked at Mare Island, in the Blacksmith shop, he was a blacksmith helper. My mother had gone back to San Antonio to help me get ready to come over here, and she stayed behind. They didn't have, they were living with my sister, when she left, and my father left. So I came to stay there with my sister. You couldn't find any houses.

Rosana: Where did your sister live?

Sra. Aguilar: On D Street. I forgot the number, but on D Street.

Rosana: What kind of neighborhood was D Street back then?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh there was a lot of Italian people, and a few Mexican families, but mostly Italian people.

Rosana: And this is about between what street and what street?

Sra. Aguilar: Between E and C, and 13 and 14. She lived closer to 13. It was a big three story house, three flats, and she lived in the middle flat. I stayed there with her until I found a house. Then I found a house on C Street, an old broken house, all filthy dirty, and all broken, and my Aunt went and helped me clean it up, and I rented that house. When my mother came back from

San Antonio, I took her with me, to live with me. My father would come just once a month from Mare Island.

Rosana: Where was, where is Mare Island?

Sra. Aguilar: It's in Vallejo. Near Vallejo, right on the bay.

Rosana: Your father was a longshoremen? Or –

Sra. Aguilar: He was a blacksmith helper, blacksmith helper at Mare Island.

Rosana: Blacksmith, you said that. Where was the house that you finally rented on C Street?
The dirty house. Between

Sra. Aguilar: Across from the mill, you know where the mill is? Across from there.

Rosana: Was that the same kind of neighborhood? Was it Italian mostly?

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, a lot of the Italian family on both sides of me lived there, on the both sides of me there were Italians, and the one in the back was Italian, and the people that lived upstairs they were what you call Okie. And they were dirty. Oh, I had never seen such filth, you know, some Mexican people are they have their house messy, but not filthy dirty. Is that being recorded?

Rosana: That's ok.

Sra. Aguilar: But these were, oh, many times I went into the hall, you know, to catch a baby that was falling down the steps, and I got to see the beds without any sheets, and the color of the ground and messy and dirty everything. The, when I moved there the [hard to hear] were that big and I got a man to come and clean the whole thing, there was wine bottles with prongs that big, but my this daughter that lives here with me, she fell on one and it stuck here on her back. Oh was I scared, and I had all that place cleaned up and they, and still they threw the egg shells down the front window of the place, the egg shells, wine bottles, beer bottles, everything outside. Until I went to the landlord and I told him, I just can't take this.

Rosana: Was the landlord Italian or?

Sra. Aguilar: No, he was Anglo, I guess, Irish or something, I don't know.

Rosana: Did you want to live in a place where they were more Mexicans or did it not bother you to live with Italians?

Sra. Aguilar: No it didn't bother me. They were nice people. I've been able to get along with all kinds of people. All the time, and my husband he gets along better, he used to get along better with the Jews and Blacks than he did with the Mexican people, the Mexican men. Yeah. Because his family moved into a neighborhood there in San Antonio, Texas, you see, where the

Blacks, the neighborhood of the Blacks starts in East San Antonio, there it starts. From there on, nothing but Polish, Jewish, and German people are settled. It looks like they all settled in one, and mostly Jewish people. So my husband played mostly with Black kids and Jewish kids, they all played together right there, and he grew up, he hardly could speak Spanish when I married him. All his brothers and sisters also could hardly speak Spanish, as they were growing up.

Rosana: Back to Sacramento, what was your first impression of Sacramento in general?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, I put I said, oh my goodness, people sure live funny here. And they speak such funny Spanish, because the first Sunday I went to Mass, first when I first came, my sister says “let’s go to the movies” I said “ok.” So I went inside and showered myself, I put on my best dress, my best shoes, my gloves, my hat, and I came out. My sister looked at me and said “Where are you going?” I said “well you said we were going to the show.” She said “well you don’t dress like that to go to the show here.” I said “you don’t?” She said, “no, you just go just like you are.” “Well Toni, I can’t go to the show looking like that, with a house dress.” She said “that’s the way you go, go back and put that, or you’ll look out of place dressed like that, so go back and change.” So I did, I didn’t take no hat or gloves, you know, but I left my same dress on. I said “Oh my goodness” She said “the theaters are sometimes dirty, and they’ll dirty your good clothes.” She said “come on go, because we are going to a cheap theater, we are not going to a look theater. This is the end of the lunch” she said. So I did, you know. And that was the first impression, because in San Antonio you don’t do that, you’ll get criticized.

Rosana: Now did you go from your house out on C Street walking or in a car?

Sra. Aguilar: Walking. If it was close enough.

Rosana: Did you have a car at the time?

Sra. Aguilar: No, we didn't have a car.

Rosana: No car?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: How did get from San Antonio to Sacramento?

Sra. Aguilar: The train. The Army packed all of my furniture, my husband was a Sergeant, so they packed all of my furniture and they sent it by rail, and we came by rail.

Rosana: And then your mom, later on when she came, she came by train also?

Sra. Aguilar: I think she came on the bus. Yeah she came on the bus. But I and the children came on the train.

Rosana: Did you stay in this house for long? The house on C Street?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh yes, we stayed there from 1942 to 1945. I bought a house on 13th Street and about on right on VE Day my husband was discharged from the Army on disability. He was given a disability discharge.

Rosana: What happened to him?

Sra. Aguilar: He was sick, his hands would just swell up, he couldn't even play the trumpet. And that was his instrument. His feet would swell up, oh he would be so sick, up to his knees it would get swell up like that and it would look red. He had some kind of neuritis or arthritis or something like that.

Rosana: You mentioned something before, when you were talking about the two boyfriends, Paulo and Mike, I guess you said?

Sra. Aguilar: Mike Gonzales.

Rosana: Gonzales, and you said Mike was just about your age, a few months younger. Was your husband quite a bit older than you?

Sra. Aguilar: No, he was five years older than me.

Rosana: Did that cause any problems?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: In your family?

Sra. Aguilar: No problems at all.

Rosana: Ok.

Sra. Aguilar: Oh, no, my husband, oh well to tell you, a lot of people have asked me that why, how old was I when I became a widow, and I told them 52. And “they said you were young yet why didn’t you get married again.” I said “because I never could find someone that could take my husband’s place.” That’s how much I cared about him. He was a man that never pushed me around or said an ugly word to me, he never put a hand on his children to spank them or whip them or nothing like that, or slap them or anything like that, and he never used a hard voice on them, and he got his money, he kept so much for himself, the rest he turned over to me and he never asked me “well what did you do to the money that I gave you? Or how come you are out of money now - when I gave you so much, what did you do to it?” He never questioned me about anything.

Rosana: So your husband came home in 194. . .?

Sra. Aguilar: Five.

Rosana: Five, and at that point you guys bought a house on 13th?

Sra. Aguilar: No, I had already bought it by the time he came.

Rosana: You just bought it?

Sra. Aguilar: Uh huh, by the time he came, I had already bought it, cause we couldn't find, I didn't like the place where I was living, the people that upstairs, well upstairs there were, everyone that moved there, they weren't clean at all. They made too much racket and noise and everything. My father was working at night at Mare Island and he couldn't sleep, because later you know, he would commute

[End of tape one]

[Tape two begins]

Guadalupe Aguilar is the informant. Rosana Madrid is the interviewer. This tape was done on January 16, 1984, in Sacramento, California, for the Ethnic Community Survey of the Sacramento History Center. The interview is done in English with a little bit of Spanish. This is tape two of a four part series.

Sra. Aguilar: And my neighbors, this neighbor was Mexican, but this neighbor on here she was Irish. The old Burke place, a big two story house, beautiful home. The Burkes, Mrs. Burke lived

there and then the other, next to that, the Coys lived there, some German people. Across the street Italian, and across the street on this side Mexican people lived. It was a mixed neighborhood. But they were good people. I didn't, I never could get along in a neighborhood where people were, uh how you call it, irresponsible people. That they didn't care how their yard looked, their home, or they didn't respect other people's property, I couldn't get along in a place like that. I'd just try to get away from it.

Rosana: Now, uh when your husband came back, did he start working or did you start working?

Sra. Aguilar: No, I, he would never let me work. Never. He said "you stay home and take care of the kids. It's my job to bring home the bacon." He would never let me work. But during the war, you know, they were out looking for people. I didn't have anything to do, the kids were already, you know, they were bigger, and my mother was at home, so I could leave them with her, I wasn't going to leave them with a stranger. So I, on the sneak, I would go to work. I worked for the American Can Company on the slitters, and I worked for Mark Hart. I had a table of women, I was, I'd teach them how to, because I started working as, I started working, doing the same kind of work they were doing, but after a while the man came and told me to teach this women how to do the work. Because they didn't have difficulty teaching me, I learned quick. See, and I could do my own, papers, that I do have to fill out, and these other women didn't and there were some high school girls there working, and they couldn't do the paper work. You know, they had to do fill out the sheet to get paid and all of that, and at the American Can, my sister-in-law said "Lupe will you go with me to see about a job at the American Can, I want to find a job there." I told her "All right, what do you want me to go with you for?" Well she

couldn't speak English, and she said "well I want you to interpret for me and I want you to help me fill the application." I said "all right." So I went to the American Can with her and we went to the office, you know, people that don't know, they are kind of afraid to go into the office and to talk to the person, and when you are not like that and you know how to present yourself or how to express yourself, well you are not afraid to go and talk to another person are you? So I went with her, and I said "come on let's go." We went in and I talked to the personnel of the, who you talked to about jobs. I asked him if my sister-in-law, I told him that my sister-in-law was looking for a job and I would like an application for her. So he gave me the application for her. I filled it out for her, I filled all of the whole thing for her. I went and turned it in. And then he said "wait a minute" and I waited I didn't know what he was going to do. He said "here, fill this out, this application for yourself." I said, "I'm not looking for a job." He said "well, we need the people very bad and you look like a person that could do the job that we need you for." So I said "well ok since this comes from heaven," so I filled it, and they put my sister-in-law back, in the very back where they were marking the tin, you know, where the tin is damaged, they had to mark it, and that's where they put her to work. They put me to work up here in front where the slitters were, it paid more money too. Where the slitters were, you had to throw them in a certain way that the slitter needs to, a tenth of an inch away from the edge it had to fit to cut the cans, because if it didn't it went crooked and the tin would fly and it might hurt somebody, see one did, when I was starting to learn one did fly and hit me right here.

Rosana: On the forehead?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes. So they taught me, and I learned real quick and they put me to work there. Then one of my cousins was working back there and she complained, because she had seniority and she wanted to, she had been wanting to transfer to the front on the slitters and she hadn't been transferred yet, and how come they had put me? And the man told them to, "did you fill out your own application?" She said "no, somebody else filled it out for me." He said "well this woman filled out her own application, so we can't give you a job until you can fill out your own application, up here in front." So that's why they didn't give her that job.

Rosana: So how long did you work doing at the slitters?

Sra. Aguilar: At the slitters - three months. My husband wrote and said "listen, I think you are working," I didn't tell him I was working, "I think you are working, well you better quit or I will stop the allotment." So I stopped, I had to quit. Then at Mark Ward, I worked only about a month and a half there.

Rosana: And what exactly were you doing at Mark Ward?

Sra. Aguilar: Packing, things that were being sent to the war zone. Like computers and transistors and things. These small things, we would pack them in a thick paper and then they put them in wax, dip them in wax, and they were put to be sent overseas. Packed to be sent overseas. That's what we used to do. We had long tables like that and women around it working on the tables.

Rosana: So it was all women?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, all women.

Rosana: Was it also all women at American Can Company?

Sra. Aguilar: All women. Just a few men bosses. A few men that were bosses.

Rosana: Did you ever feel bad that the men were bosses? How did you feel about the men being bosses?

Sra. Aguilar: I was used to it so I didn't think nothing about it. I never have been opposed to a man being the head of the family or being the boss. Sometimes a man is not very good at that, a family man I mean, and the woman is better, so, if you, if it's all right with him, he should let his wife take over. See? They will have a better home and uh, but when the man can do everything himself, well it's better if he does it. But my husband, he let me do everything myself. He gave me the money and I did everything. [Phone rings, Sra. Aguilar says they will answer it over there.]

Rosana: So when your husband came back you didn't work anymore?

Sra. Aguilar: No, I didn't work at all. With him being at home, I couldn't go out to work at all.

Rosana: So how did you have an income? From his disability?

Sra. Aguilar: From his disability, he had his disability and then he went to work, he was feeling better and he went to work at the Southern Pacific. He couldn't do any, play the trumpet, because his fingers were, he had arthritis in his fingers and he was giving it up. But he joined the American Legion in order to stay in practice. He didn't want to give his trumpet up altogether. He stayed in practice. He joined the American Legion and he was in the band. He went to work for the Southern Pacific. But he couldn't get along at the Southern Pacific, they were all Mexican men working there, in the department where he was working, and he couldn't get along. So anyway when they had a reduction over there, he was one of the first ones to go, because he had just started. And afterwards he went to work for the Western Pacific. Sometimes he would be so sick with those feet so swollen and he would force his shoes on to go to work. I told him "don't go to work." I'd tell him "don't go to work, we don't, the house is already paid for, all we have to worry about is the food and the utilities, don't go to work. Let me go to work here at the cannery, it's right close, and you stay home. The kids are already grown, don't go to work." "No, no, no," and he would go to work anyway. With his feet so swollen up.

Rosana: What year did he change from Southern Pacific to Western Pacific?

Sra. Aguilar: About the end of 46 or the first of 47, I'm thinking it was 46. And then he went to work for Western Pacific. There he did like it. There was nothing but Italians and French and he was a machinist helper to a Frenchman. That, and those kind of people took a liking to my husband. You know, they liked him. Afterwards, my husband, he worked five years for the

Western Pacific and then he bought a business, a beer tavern. And all these men would come over to his beer tavern to drink.

Rosana: Where was the beer tavern?

Sra. Aguilar: On 6th, you know where the back of where the Canadian bank is now? Right there, next to Weinstocks.

Rosana: Did you participate and help him with the tavern?

Sra. Aguilar: I helped him with the paperwork.

Rosana: What was it called?

Sra. Aguilar: The Little Roma.

Rosana: What kind of tavern was it?

Sra. Aguilar: Beer. He sold just beer at that time. Later on, oh about five years later, he bought a, cause they were starting to tear down all the West End and the redevelopment came in. He bought one of the bars that went out of business there. They were retiring, the owners, they sold the liquor license to him.

Rosana: What was the name of that place?

Sra. Aguilar: The MoMo Club.

Rosana: MoMo?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, it was a Negro place.

Rosana: Uh huh, and did it continue to be a Negro place?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, the MoMo Club, the owners were Negro, but mostly a mixed cliental they had, because they had floor shows and things like that. But ours was the Little Roma, but we are, the majority of our customers were Blacks, uh the working kind of Blacks.

Rosana: At the, at the Little Roma?

Sra. Aguilar: At the Little Roma, they worked for the State, at the Post Office, the County, the City, and a lot of the enlisted men from all the air fields and Army bases here during the Korean War, they all went to our place. They didn't have no other place to go but our place. But a lot of other people you know, Hindus and Chinese, and Whites, a lot of Whites went in there, into our place. We had a very good business.

Rosana: So you wouldn't say at all that it was a Mexican bar? That it was a Mexican Tavern.

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: The

Sra. Aguilar: No Mexicans went in there.

Rosana: Really. Where did they go?

Sra. Aguilar: Further up or further down to skid row. They had bars down there and there were some over here on 12th Street, Mexican bars, on 12th Street.

Rosana: And the MoMo's Club? You kept that going at the same time that the Little Roma was going?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh yeah, that one was a nightclub. It was a high class nightclub. They had floor shows and everything.

Rosana: Where was the MoMo Club?

Sra. Aguilar: On Capital and Sixth. Capital and Sixth, I think it was. When the redevelopment came in they sold the license to us and they got rid of all of the rest of the things and they retired, because they were two old brothers that owned it. Black brothers.

Rosana: You don't remember their names?

Sra. Aguilar: I don't remember their names, but I knew their names, but I don't remember it now.

Rosana: Do you remember at all which side of the street it was one?

Sra. Aguilar: Well going from Capital Street from on Capital Street like this on the left on the left hand side.

Rosana: So there is a parking lot there now?

Sra. Aguilar: No, I think it is one of the big buildings. Those big buildings.

Rosana: Oh, I see. So the two brothers sold you and your husband the license.

Sra. Aguilar: The license.

Rosana: So what did you do with the license and no building?

Sra. Aguilar: No, we had the Little Roma, on Sixth and L.

Rosana: Oh, so that's how you got the Little Roma going?

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah,

Rosana: What year was this? 19

Sra. Aguilar: When we bought the license, I mean the whiskey license. We had already been there with a beer license, about, we got the Little Roma in 1950. I think we got the whiskey license in 1955 or 56, somewhere around there.

Rosana: So then all you did was take the whiskey license, the hard liquor license over to the Little Roma,

Sra Aguilar: Yes.

Rosana: And then you were never an owner of the MoMo Club?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: Oh I see.

Sra. Aguilar: No, we didn't own the MoMo Club.

Rosana: So you were now, you had the Little Roma and that was both a beer and whiskey place.

Sra. Aguilar: Uh huh.

Rosana: How long did you have it?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, we had the Little Roma, we bought it, my husband bought it in 1950. But I didn't go on the license until 1951. He put my name on the license, so I could help him back there. I had never been in a bar, and I was afraid of Colored people at the time. But you know, they are good people, they are very nice people. The Black people, those that are God fearing people they're very nice people. I'd say that some of them are much nicer than a lot of Mexican people. That I have known. Yeah, and uh, they had a lot of respect for me, whenever I was around there with my husband, they never used a cuss word. And anybody that didn't know me started to use a cuss word, one of the customers would go over there and say "hey, don't be using that kind of language, Mrs. Paul is behind the bar."

Rosana: Your ride is here.

[Ends interview for now.]

[Interview begins again.]

Rosana: You were talking about the Little Roma.

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, we had got it, my husband had got it in 1950. In 19, then they were buying there for the redevelopment, and I was the last one to go on, because I wouldn't agree to the price they wanted to give me. You see, my husband had paid for the property, he had paid \$27,000. They wanted to give me \$24,000. I told them "no, I won't take it, no – my husband wanted \$40,000, he had told me to ask \$40,000." The man said "no, that it wasn't worth the \$40,000, that I had paid \$24,000." I said that "you had got the wrong information because we paid \$27,000. I don't have to lie to you." I told him, I got mad you know. And anyway we hassled for two years back and forth, and I told him

listen, the time isn't any more where you people would come and fool the Mexicans, or the Spaniards, or the Indians, and beat them out of their land. I said, we have learned how to speak, read, and write English since then. So you can't tell me what price to take for my land. I want what I'm asking you and that's what I want. So if you can't give it to me, don't lose my time and you don't lose yours.

He said "well, the, I can have you, the place condemned and then you would have to take less than that." I said "I'll take it to court and if twelve men say that I have to sell it to you for fifty cents, I sell it to you for fifty cents. If twelve men say so, but not before that." So he left. I had a lawyer, we had a lawyer, my son had gotten a lawyer, Seberg he was an Assemblymen for the State. My son told him, he got a hold of him Seberg, and we got him as a lawyer. So then when he came the next time, "I told him, listen, don't talk to me, talk to my lawyer. Mr. Seberg is my lawyer." So I gave him the address. So he went and hassled over there with Mr. Seberg. For two years he went back and forth, we went back and forth. Mr. Seberg said, "Mrs. Aguilar, these people say what will be the least price you will take for your place?" I told him "tell them that the least price will be what the" – what do you call it BeBe? The one that came to the – "appraiser. What the appraiser told me my place was worth." They said that it was worth, and that's two appraisers, "they said it was worth \$30,000." So they gave me \$30,000 cash. Cash,

the whole \$30,000. I don't want no lawyer fees to go out of it, I don't want no moving fees to go out of it, I don't want nothing, I want \$30,000 cash for myself, I'll sell to them. So they did. They accepted, and they moved me and they moved my furniture over here, they gave me \$200 for the broken up pieces of fixtures that were in there, and the lawyer fees, I had to pay half and they had to pay half.

Rosana: So you finally sold, your

Sra. Aguilar: In 1960, my husband was killed there. In a holdup. In 1960. He used to play taps for the county service office, every time they buried a veteran, they take the four veteran men to, they –

Rosana: The 21 gun salute?

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, and my husband used to play taps. And that morning, they had buried three veterans, and my father stayed in the bar while he was out there burying these veterans and he came home around close to 1:00 p.m. and my father, and he told my father "tell Lupe to get ready and go and see" because we lived upstairs, we had sold the house on 13th Street and we lived upstairs. Because he bought that property, you see. He said "tell Lupe to get ready and go see BeBe now" this girl here. Mary Louise, we call her BeBe, it means baby. He said "to go see BeBe because she hasn't been over to see us in two weeks and we don't know what is wrong with her, and she hasn't even called, so tell Lupe to go see what is wrong with her." So I told my father, "well Dad," because my husband had been sick, you know he had been in the hospital

with pneumonia, I told my father, “well Dad, I hate to go and leave Paulo by himself, he might need something.” Then there had been some holdups in the liquor store at the corner of 6th and L. There had been two holdups, and I told him, “I hate to go off and leave Paulo by himself, with nobody here to help him or nothing and today’s Tuesday, neither the bartender nor the waitress is coming to work, it’s a day off.” He said “well you know what your husband is, he said for you to go see your daughter, so you better go see your daughter.” I said “oh well, ok.” It was 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon when I left, because she lived in North Highlands. “I said all right, I will.” So we left, my father and I, to go see my daughter, my Papa had a car. We got to go see my daughter and we came back around 4:00 p.m., no it was 4:55 p.m. when we came back. The street, on Tuesdays, business is very slow and that’s why we used to give the bartender and the barmaid off, because business was very slow. And it was the day we bought all the, my husband bought all the, he ordered the whiskeys, bought the beers. So he would go down in the morning with over \$200 to buy the beer, the whiskeys he would order them, and he would pay for those at the end of the month. So, he came down and my father had already bought the beers when he came back from playing taps. So, anyway, it was 4:55 p.m. and the street was real quiet, even no cars were on the street. I told my father, as he parked the car, I told my father “I wonder what’s wrong, there is no, it looks too quiet,” usually in front of the Little Roma there are two or three people standing, and I told my father, “I wonder why everything is so quiet.” He said “I don’t know.” Then I told him “well Dad, go upstairs and I’m going to go in here and see what’s, how Paulo’s doing to see if he needs any change or anything.” He said “all right.” So I went in and everything was quiet and not a soul in the place. When there was always two or three people in there. And I went in, and about this time, Ward, the man that did the cleaning was coming out of the store room, where we stock the things. And he was coming

with a towel in his hand and I told him, "Ward, where's Paulo?" He said "he's there." I said "where, I don't see him" "Well he is sitting there." I said "what's the matter?" "I don't know." I walked over there, and there he was sitting with his head like this. I told him "Veijo, what's the matter?" He couldn't answer me. Then Ward said "some man came in here and beat him up, Lupe, and robbed him." I said "beat him up!" He said "yes. I think they kicked him or something." He said "when I came in there was nobody in here, I came in to" I said "well when was this?" And he said, "like at 4:00 p.m. I came in to tell him not to forget to put the radio for the baseball, to hear the baseball," because at 4:30 p.m. the people start coming out from the State and the Post Office and they come in there to drink some beer on their way home, and they want to know the baseball, what do you call it? Whatever, you know, I forget what the name of it, of everything. "And so, I told him not to forget to put the radio on and he said he was putting the radio, he told me he was putting the radio on, connecting the radio on, when someone came from the back and hit him on the head, and I found him in the back in the restroom, and he had the towel to wipe him off because he was all full of blood. I asked him what was the matter, but he couldn't talk, he was, he couldn't talk." So, I went upstairs to call the doctor, and maybe an ambulance and call the police because they had said they had held him up. Ward did. But you know that I went up, and I couldn't remember not even my son's phone number, I couldn't remember the police, not even the I couldn't remember the doctor's phone number, not even the I couldn't think of not even to even to look it up in the book. I was paralyzed. You know, when I saw all of that blood over him. Finally I remembered my son's number and I called him and he was just getting home from work. It was after 5:00 p.m. I told him "I don't know what is wrong with your father, come over right away. There is something wrong with him. He has been held up." So my son came over right away and then I called the doctor, and the doctor was in

surgery, oh so I talked to his wife at home, because he wasn't at the office or nowhere and she said "I'll try to get a hold of him right away and I'll call you back." But I didn't call the emergency, I didn't call nothing until my son came and he took over and he did everything. Because I was just like I was paralyzed. About that time my father and one of the customers brought my husband upstairs, and I told them "what did you want to bring him upstairs, I want him to be I want the ambulance to come and take him." My father said "Lupe, Paulo was robbed, there is no money in the cash register, he was robbed. He's not feeling good, he can't stay downstairs." I said "all right." So they put him in bed and I started removing his clothes and putting pajamas on him, when he said "I want to puke." He could hardly, barely talk. I took him up and took him to the bathroom and he threw up a lot of blood, uh, but a lot of blood he threw up. I got so scared, oh, I was scared. I took him back to bed and at about that time the police came. By this time he was able to say a few words, and he told the police that there were three men, two Black men, they were young kids and one White man and that he was standing there, putting, trying to connect the radio to get the results from the baseball game, when this man came from the back he said he heard the door open but he thought it was somebody that was looking for somebody and then finally took off. And he had the doors closed, on account of the cooling system and he didn't see nobody, but this guy, crawled on the bottom, you see to where he was, and then he got up and got a hold of him like that, through the back like that. He pressed here, real hard, and then hit him in the head with something, and he got to turn around and look at the man and then he said he saw the White man, he had him like that, and he hit him on the head and two young Black men that had jumped over the counter. Well anyway that was at 4:30 p.m. in the after, in the evening. They took him to the hospital and at 8:20 p.m. he died. From that. It was, for two years I don't know, I thought I would go crazy. Finally, when they sold,

when they bought. For those two years he was going to appear on Memorial Day in the Memorial Day parade and he had on that thing over there, he had his veteran's cap, and his trumpet, he had it cleaned up and everything. For two years, that thing did not get dusted, the cap still lay on there all full of dust. The towel, he always kept his own towel to wipe himself, because he was afraid of getting sores on his mouth, from us, you know. So he kept his own towel. It was still hanging in the closet and once in a while I would go in and smell it, and I would say "it still smells of my old man." For two years, those things stayed there and I felt all that time so terrible. I think that's what caused my illness, at way later on. I would just keep holding and holding because, just a little before that he had asked me "Lupe if anything happens to me or if I die, I" he used to call me Prieta, "if anything"

[Side one of Tape two ends, there is no side two]

[Tape three begins]

This is Rosana Madrid with the Sacramento History Center's Ethnic Community Survey interviewing Guadalupe Aguilar on 48th Street, in Sacramento on January 25, 1984. The tape is mostly in English with some Spanish, it is tape three of four and it covers her life as a widow, the redevelopment of Sacramento's West End, El Centro Mexicano, El Comite Mexicano de Beneficencias and the American-Mexican War Mothers.

Rosana: How did you go from that place, here and what did you sell the Little Roma for?

Sra. Aguilar: Well I sold the Little Roma, you know, we kept haggling back and forth the Redevelopment and myself for two years. Because they didn't want to give me the price that I asked for, so I had to get a lawyer and finally they asked me what the place was appraised for which was \$30,000, and so I sold it to them and then I bought my house. I had already bought my house, I bought my house in 1962, two years after my husband died. And then, I took that money and some money that I had saved already and I was trying to buy or relocate in a place where I could have a restaurant and a cocktail lounge, you know. I didn't want a beer bar or a whiskey bar. I wanted something like a restaurant, something like that, something nice. I didn't care about bars or anything like that. I never did like whiskey or things like that. But, my children wouldn't let me buy or invest in a restaurant, they said it was too much work for me. And all of them had good jobs, they didn't want to leave their jobs to help me. You see, if I was to buy a restaurant, I would want them to help me. But, if I was to invest in a nightclub or just a drinking place, I wouldn't want them to help me. I didn't want them to help me. Because I was afraid on account of what had happened to their father. So they wouldn't let me invest in a restaurant. So I bought, I relocated where I thought I could cater to the common people, you know, like the well, we were catering mostly to the Black clientele, and they followed me. Even if I hadn't wanted to cater to them, they followed me to where I relocated. They were very nice people. Working people, that worked for the state, the post office, the McClellan and what's the other Air Force Base? Mather Air Force Base. Enlisted men from the Air Force, all of these used to come into our place. Because Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, with a Juke Box, they danced and they drank, and I never had any problems. Never had any problems with just the Black trade. But then, when I wanted to sell the place, because my kids told me "sell the place Mama, don't you, you're too tired, sell it." I said:

I can't sell it because my father, your father before he died, a little before he died he made me promise him that I wouldn't sell it. He told me to keep it and to support myself and take care of myself, so I wouldn't have to ask nobody for anything. Not even you kids. Because you kids had your own obligations and your own families and it wasn't fair for me to pile up there on you also. He said you take care of yourself and don't ask nobody for nothing and that's why he asked me not to sell it.

I said, "that's why I don't want to sell, because I made that promise to your father. If not you think I wouldn't have sell it a long time ago?" And so, and so I opened this club and I called it Paulo's Club on Franklin Boulevard. But then, when my kids kept telling me to sell, I started to sell it and I couldn't sell it because my clientele was Black. I couldn't sell, so I had to find a way of being able to sell it and I had to turn it into a White place or any other thing. So then Mexican people started coming there and even White people because I had real nice dance music. It was a nightclub and it was called Paulo's Nightclub. I had very nice music and a lot of people that like this, Spanish music, used to come in there. I had a very nice place, very nice place going there. No drunk drinking or no drunks or nothing. I never had, five years I stayed there at that place, I never had any problems.

Rosana: How did the Blacks feel about the change from –

Sra. Aguilar: Well they thought I had sold to somebody and somebody else was running it. I didn't appear around there after I hired, I had a Mexican bartender and I let him continue to run the place for me. He stole me, he robbed me out of \$65,000. The Mexican bartender, and my Black bartenders never robbed me. I didn't have to worry about nothing with those bartenders. They even protected me. Anybody that came in there trying to insult me or say anything to me,

they would throw them out themselves. “This is Mrs. Paulo, and you don’t come talking to her like that,” they’d say. The Black people that used to come in there.

Rosana: So you, in what year did you make the change over from Paulo’s Club to make it a nightclub for Anglos?

Sra. Aguilar: In what year? In the beginning, in the ending of 66, or the beginning of 67, I’m not very sure. Because I sold it in September 1966, no not September, November 1967.

Rosana: And what did you do with the money that you sold, that you got from the sale, did you invest again?

Sra. Aguilar: I relocated in Franklin Boulevard with the name of Paulo’s Nightclub.

Rosana: Right, and then you made it into –

Sra Aguilar: No, the Roma I sold it in 1962 and moved to Franklin Boulevard and opened a nightclub with the name of Paulo’s Club and then I sold that one in 1967 and I retired.

Rosana: You retired, and was it during all of this time that you became active in El Comite Mexicano de Beneficencias?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, right after that. I never had been active in clubs or associations or anything like that. I was at home raising my family and then I was in there helping my husband. But after he died, about a year or two after he died. A year I think, after he died, my aunt got me to join the Beneficiencias and I had been in there only one month when they made me treasurer. Because they couldn't –

Rosana: Who was Aunt?

Sra. Aguilar: This was 1973.

Rosana: Who was your aunt, and had she always been active?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh she was always active in all kinds of clubs here in Sacramento. Lourdes Dias el Ortiz.

Rosana: Was her maiden name Dias?

Sra. Aguilar: No, her maiden name was Jimenez. She is a descendant of Cura de la Garza.

Rosana: Why was she involved in El Comite de Beneficencias?

Sra. Aguilar: Because she always liked to be active and she was one of the first ones to be in the Madres Mexicanas that had the monument erected, or how do you say erected or?

Rosana: That's right, now when you joined El Comite de Beneficencias what was your initial impression of the group?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh I thought it was very nice, but even I couldn't talk very much Spanish and I could speak Spanish and carry a conversation, but these big words that some of these people used, I didn't understand them. So I had to buy me a dictionary to look. That's a dictionary from Spanish to from English to Spanish, and like that, in order to know what the words meant and how to spell them.

Rosana: So what did the group do when you first joined it? What were their objectives?

Sra. Aguilar: You want me to tell you about the group, it's going to take a little time.

Rosana: Sure.

Sra. Aguilar: Well you see, when in 1936, I think, let me see.

Rosana: That's ok, I can look it up in a moment.

Sra. Aguilar: In 1936 I think it was, it must be somewhere, I can't see, doggone, it makes me so mad with my eyes. In 1936, it was, when they started. You see, when people that worked in the fields died, and there was no relatives and nobody to claim the body, the county of whatever

city they died would just take the body and gave it a pauper funeral or burned the body, see? And then this time a man died there in Napa, California, and they were going to do the same thing with him, so this man, this man and ten other men, he was the one that started you know, he told these men “they are going to do this with his body, I don’t think it’s right, he’s a Catholic and Catholics don’t burn their bodies, I think we should claim the body ourselves and give him a burial ourselves.” He told them, and it was ten other men. They agreed and they all got together, pitched in and got the money together to claim his the man’s body and bury the man. So then he told these eleven men: “Why don’t we get together and pitch in every month a quarter or whatever we can, pitch in every month and form a fund for when any of our companions die, let’s claim their body and give them a funeral, why should we let anybody give them a pauper funeral?” So that’s what they did, and gradually this, these eleven men became bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger, and they started finding out that in other counties they were doing the same thing with the Mexican men that were dying, and they found, so they would go to these places and organize these other men. You see, more men to do the same thing, and that’s how the organization started growing, little by little, and little by little. But, they never did go to the state and how do you call it, you know when you, my goodness I can’t remember the word, to incorporate the organization. So they, went to, they never did because they didn’t know about these things, see? So then one of the men, one of the men that started in the organization, his son went to school, and he started to go to college and when he came out and saw what they were doing about the organization, they started to get, they started to get all the people they could after that. They started to get all the people they could, Mexican people, to pay 25 cents a month and when one died, they would give him so much money for their funeral expenses, so you see. So people did, you know, started the Mexican people. And

when this man that sent his son to college, came out and he saw what they were doing, he told his father "Well daddy, this is becoming a big organization and you have to incorporate it, you have to go to the state and incorporate that, you're acting outside of the law with this." So they got him to guide them and to tell them what to do. So he was the one, his name is Ramon, no not Ramon, Duran, Ramon Duran.

Rosana: Was this a man in the Napa Chapter or in Sacramento?

Sra. Aguilar: No he was in the Marysville, I think it was Marysville where he was. Ramon Duran. They incorporated, by this time they had thousands of dollars and they were going to supposed to pay a big amount in IRS, to the IRS, but somehow I don't know the whole thing, you know and I'm not sure I'm saying the thing right but, Mr. Dominguez Gonsalves Dominguez, he was president when I became treasurer, he knows more about the organization, and he could tell you more about it, if you would like to talk to him.

Rosana: Ok, sure. Afterwards I'll get his name and address.

Sra. Aguilar: Any way, they organized the organization, so any Mexican person uh, a family man that wanted to enter the organization, become a member of the organization, all he had to pay was 50 cents and they, he could get help for his whole family in case one of the family died. Now, it's an organization that is all over the State of California, all the way to Chula Vista. From Chico, California, and I don't know how far up North, up to Chula Vista. There are forty *supercelas* or chapters, whatever you want to call it. Forty *supercelas*. Here in Sacramento,

there are three, the 20, the 4th, and the 5th, I belong to the 5th. They started paying out 25 cents into the fund, then 50 cents, and it went up and up and now we pay \$2.50 a month and the whole family gets a benefit. It isn't an insurance, the whole family benefits from this fund. You know how much the fund was when this woman that is president now of the whole organization? You know how much the fund was? \$300,000. But, now, as things have been going up and everything costs so much now, it has been going down, and a lot of people have been dying, it's been going down to \$28,000 I think that's what they read in the last meeting.

Rosana: So what does the, what do the Sacramento groups do, if they are not an insurance company, tell me about what it is that they do.

Sra. Aguilar: It's to benefit the working man that can't pay big insurances. That can't buy big insurance for his family. Or to benefit his family when he dies. It's just like a fund that is being gotten together to help this family man. If he dies, his wife gets \$1,200 from the Suprima. That's the head office where Mr. Perez started. Our Supercelas Cinco gives the widow \$200, so she gets \$1,400 to help pay the funeral expenses. If she dies, he gets \$1,400, and his children are all insured up to the age of 18 years. Not insured, they are all taken care of, up to the age of 18 years. To help them with the funeral expenses. The oldest up to the age of 18 years, gets \$500. I forget up to what age they get from infant to what age get \$300.

Rosana: Now what, who is eligible for membership?

Sra. Aguilar: Anybody up to the year, until the year, below 60 years.

Rosana: How is it that people become members? Do, is it common that an Aunt would bring,

Sra. Aguilar: Oh, somebody recommends, tells them “why don’t you join this organization.” They bring them and introduce them you know, so they give them an application for them to fill and they fill it and then they install them, they take an oath that they have to, take an oath promising that they’re going to act brotherly-like in the organization and cooperate and help with everything they can to make this continue. See? These are the rules, they are in English and in Spanish. The bylaws.

Rosana: Is business conducted in both English and Spanish?

Sra. Aguilar: No, just in Spanish.

Rosana: I see.

Sra. Aguilar: But anyone that doesn’t understand English, you know, there is a lot of Mexican people that don’t understand English, don’t understand English, they will explain it to them. Because there’s a lot of people in there that, you know,

Rosana: You mean that don’t understand Spanish?

Sra. Aguilar: That don't understand Spanish. But some women are married to Anglos and they don't understand it because it is the man that has to be insured for the family to be, to have any benefits. See?

Rosana: So the man has to be insured, so how are you, why, are you a member to insure your son, or?

Sra. Aguilar: No, no, I'm insured because I'm a widow.

Rosana: Oh.

Sra. Aguilar: Any widow can insure herself. But if I had my husband, he would have to insure me, and then I would have benefits and my children would have benefits.

Rosana: And the woman who is now a president? Is she a widow?

Sra. Aguilar: No, she is married.

Rosana: So her husband is the one who is insured and she's the president.

Sra. Aguilar: And she's the president, but she was elected president. She ran against my president of *supercelas*, because each *supercelas* has it's own officers. And the Suprima doesn't have nothing to do with each *supercelas* runs its own *supercelas*, it's own group. But if anything

goes wrong that we can't settle, then we call the Suprima and they come down, and listen to our, any grievance in other words. Come down, and listen to our grievance and then they try to settle it down without having to get into fights or anything like that. It's real nice, there is a lot of young people that belong to it. Sometimes a man has become a widower and a woman who has been a widow for a long time, you know this man that became a widower married this woman who is a member and is a widow, then she doesn't have to pay no more, he continues to pay the membership.

Rosana: Now the people who are members, are they usually recently arrived people from Mexico?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, people that are recently arrived from Mexico, they can, but that they are going to stay here. They can join.

Rosana: Is that mostly who makes up the membership, or would you say that the members are mostly, Mexican-Americans who have been around a long time?

Sra. Aguilar: No, mostly Mexican-Americans and some that are not American citizens, but have been here a very long, long time. They are residents of this country, but they are not American citizens for long, and some that recently came from Mexico, but are going to make this their home. But if they are going back to Mexico, no, they can't join.

Rosana: Tell me, were there, the occupations of the people who are members of El Comite Mexicano de Beneficencias? Was there any certain kind of occupation?

Sra. Aguilar: Most of them are agricultural workers and, not many, not too many of them, some work at the field, at McClellan Field, and some work in the canneries, that are cannery workers mostly. A lot of them are retired people. You know, old people, retired. You'd be surprised some of those retired people now, at that time when it first started they were very poor people, but you'd be surprised some of those retired people now, we have, we want to get money together to help somebody, one of the members, or to do something to raise funds for something, and you'd be surprised, those old, old Mexican fellows, retired, that are not working any more bring out their pocket, their wallet and take out the \$50 bills and the \$100 bills and drop them in their to help out.

Rosana: So other than the few people who are retired, would you say that most of the people who are members of the Comite are working class?

Sra Aguilar: Oh yeah, most of them are, in our *supercelas*, I don't know about the others, in our *supercelas* they are mostly working class. Now in Richmond, in Bakersfield, in Merced, those are that's a big *supercelas*. They send in dues that are paid every month by the members, they sent in over a \$1,000 of dues. Those are people, you know, the better class of people that have better jobs in those areas. Fresno, Merced, Bakersfield, and where else, I mentioned another one, but I don't remember it.

Rosana: Richmond.

Sra. Aguilar: No, not Richmond, well Richmond also, but Richmond, is out this way isn't it, not down towards San Francisco?

Rosana: Yes, it is.

Sra. Aguilar: And we have all the way to Chula Vista and close to San Diego, and we have in Palm Springs we have a *supercelas*, yeah in Palm Springs. We had our convention, the convention the year before last, we had it in Palm Springs.

Rosana: Tell me, when did the *supercelas* #4, #5, #20, the ones here in Sacramento, when did they start?

Sra. Aguilar: Well the 20 has been going on for a long time. I don't know exactly when it started. But the #4 started around 74 or 75, somewhere around there. I'm not very sure when it started, but it hasn't been on very long.

Rosana: And the #5?

Sra. Aguilar: On the #5, we have been for many years already. Almost since they got organized.

Rosana: So since the thirties?

Sra. Aguilar: Around, maybe the late thirties. That's the first *supercelas* that started here in Sacramento. The #5.

Rosana: Who was it that started the #5? Do you have any idea?

Sra. Aguilar: I'm am not very sure, who was the first one. I really don't know about that, Mr. Gonsalves would be able to tell you that.

Rosana: Ok. I'll talk to him. Now do you?

Sra. Aguilar: Because I just became a member in 1967 or 68. I don't remember.

Rosana: When you joined, do you remember how many members there were to your *supercelas*?

Sra. Aguilar: When I joined you mean?

Rosana: Yes.

Sra. Aguilar: No, I don't remember how many, but we had quite a bit of members.

Rosana: Really?

Sra. Aguilar: Right now we have, I don't know exactly, but the, you see, some attend the meetings and some don't. They send their dues through the mail and never attend, just come and initiate themselves and they sent their dues through the mail and they never come to a meeting, some. But those that attend the meetings, sometimes we have 40-45 attending the meeting.

Rosana: Is there any social component to the Comite, do you do social activities other than just provide money for when somebody dies?

Sra. Aguilar: No, when we elect a president, a new president, when he takes over the reins of organization, we have a big dinner dance. The last one was here at the what do you call it? Convention Center. That's where the last one took place. Because the lady is a resident of Sacramento so they, so she was installed here in Sacramento, and the place that it took place was the convention center.

Rosana: And she was elected to president of all of the *supercelas*? Of the Suprima?

Sra. Aguilar: Of all the *supercelas*, she is the Suprima.

Rosana: What is her name?

Sra. Aguilar: Maria Aguirre, Maria Elena Aguirre.

Rosana: And is she?

Sra. Aguilar: She is the first woman to be president of the organization.

Rosana: And how did people respond to a woman being president?

Sra. Aguilar: Well they respond all right, I guess, she hasn't had any problems.

Rosana: Was there any talk that?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, at first they didn't want her, they wanted my, the one that is president of my *supercelas*. That's whom they wanted, but this woman, I don't know how she made it. He, won from him by 53 votes, but

Rosana: Out of how many? I mean out of how many total votes?

Sra. Aguilar: There's about 4000 members now. They don't, we had the convention at that time when the voting went on at Palm Springs. We had the convention. There were people from, buses, my president took two buses of members, we hired a bus to go to the convention, from 11 men that started with 25 cents. See how things can go when people unite? And uh, but I don't want to put this on the

[tape stops for a moment].

Rosana: You were saying that, that to join, to become a member you had to be 60 years or younger.

Sra. Aguilar: Younger.

Rosana: Now when you joined you were how old?

Sra. Aguilar: I was 53 or 54. 54 I think.

Rosana: Because now you are 76?

Sra. Aguilar: I'm 76.

Rosana: So, once you have joined

[Tape three, side one ends]

[Tape three, side two begins]

Rosana: Now is the Comite, is it involved at all in any patriotic, Mexican patriotic events?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: No.

Sra. Aguilar: They don't get involved in anything like that. No, no political or things like that activities.

Rosana: Now is that cultural activities.

Sra. Aguilar: All they are interested in, huh?

Rosana: Cultural activities.

Sra. Aguilar: Oh there, again we have dinner dances sometimes. You know, for the members to enjoy themselves once in a while. We have dinners right there where we have the meetings. We have a dinner after. But this we sell to make funds for the Comite. Because we get to keep 50 cents. The member pays \$2.50. We get to keep 50 cents for the *superelas*, for the expenses of the *superelas* and we send \$2.00 to the Suprima, every month, you see. So, but 50 cents that we get from the member every month isn't enough to make the expenses of the *superelas*, so we make activities in order to get money for the funds of the *superelas*. That's how come we get to pay, give anybody that dies \$200 extra. And our *superelas* is the only one that does that. Because the other ones can't afford it. But we do a lot of activities. We have dinners after the meeting, and we sell the dinner, \$1.50 or \$2.00 a plate, and I prefer to pay, you know if I had a family, I prefer to pay \$2.00 a plate there, than run home and cook supper on Sunday. Because

they serve a good, a good plate of dinner. Chicken or meat chicana with rice and beans, and or sometimes potato salad and chicken, fried chicken and a lot of things like that, salad or anything.

Rosana: Now then, where do you have the meeting?

Sra. Aguilar: You know the senior citizens building on 18th and K? That's where we have the meetings, every second Sunday of the month. Anybody can come and visit us there and listen to us when we have our meetings and they go on smoothly, just like the, like the Eagles, you know, just like a, the post 61, 61 Post of American Legion Post, I mean, auxiliaries. I belong to the American Legion, the 61 auxiliary.

Rosana: Ok.

Sra. Aguilar: I used to belong to the Eagles also, but I got sick and I couldn't attend the meetings, so I didn't pay it anymore. But I do belong to the Legion, 61 auxiliary. Our meetings go just like that. But we don't take part in any patriotic activities, Mexican or anything.

Rosana: How about religious activities? Like?

Sra. Aguilar: I don't remember taking part in any. In all, all what these Comite does is, is interested in, in having taking care of this fund that somebody doesn't come along and steal it because they have already done it, people that have gone in as officers. One of them, when we had that trouble, that we sued the Suprima. But don't, I don't want the [on the tape]

Rosana: That's ok.

Sra. Aguilar: The man that was president at that time, he took off to Mexico with a lot of money, and we had been wanting to make it a bonded, to have the, but they never have allowed it.

Rosana: Who never has?

Sra. Aguilar: Them, because they have been the ones that have been at the Suprima all the time when this has been brought up.

Rosana: Them?

Sra. Aguilar: The Suprima office, Maria Aguirre.

Rosana: Ok. Well tell me, did they have, did they have any part, did any of the chapters here in Sacramento play any part in establishing El Centro Mexicano?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: No. Did they ever have meetings in El Centro Mexicano?

Sra. Aguilar: I don't think so, no.

Rosana: So they were very distinct then?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes

Rosana: Now did you?

Sra. Aguilar: I'm not sure, I don't know. You can get that information from Mr. Gonsalves, but I don't think so. I don't think they have never did have any meetings at El Centro Mexicano. Because when they were selling El Centro Mexicano I suggested that why didn't we buy the Centro, to have the, you know to have these regular, Suprima office there, and have it stationary, and not have it here and there and there and there. And wherever the president lives, there's where the Suprima office is. See. But they wouldn't go for it.

Rosana: Now did you as an individual, participate in the formation of El Centro Mexicano?

Apart from the Comite?

Sra. Aguilar: I took part in the festivities and my daughter, Mary Louise, she was running for queen, but I hardly ever do, because there is a lot of you know, undercurrents and underhand things going, and I never did very much wanted, my daughter was running for queen at that time and she came out being a princess and another girl won for queen. She did a little, you know, (a

mano vaca cece) underhand, underhanded things in order to win. That's why my husband never would let us take part in those things. My husband was living at the time.

Rosana: That was, how about when El Centro Mexicano first started up?

Sra. Aguilar: Started up?

Rosana: They sold shares?

Sra. Aguilar: Uh huh, when they sold shares.

Rosana: Did you consider?

Sra. Aguilar: I never did buy shares, no because they never came to me, you see we never did, was active in the community like this, when my husband was living. He wouldn't let us take part, we took part in the American Legion, the things that the American Legion had. And things like that, and my son was going to college and anything that went on in the college, we took part in that. But, other than that we didn't take part in anything else.

Rosana: And after your husband died? Did you, is that?

Sra. Aguilar: That is when I went, joined the Comite through my aunt. That's when I joined the Comite.

Rosana: Is that also when your daughter ran for one of the queens?

Sra. Aguilar: No she, that was long before that. That she became princess of El Centro Mexicano. She had to sell tickets you know. Sell a lot of tickets, and the one that sells the most tickets, that's the one that gets chosen queen. And my daughter wouldn't go out and sell tickets, she said because they have to go out to the ranches where the at that time there were a lot of Nationals working in the ranches, and the girl would go around to the ranches you know exhibiting herself and all of that, to sell the tickets. And my daughter said she wasn't going to go around, she told my aunt, "and I'm not going to these ranches exhibiting myself to sell tickets Tia Nola. If you want, you sell the tickets that you want to and well sell whatever we can. I don't care if I'm not queen or any of that." That's this one here you know. His wife. She is too outspoken. And uh, so she wouldn't and I, we only sold the ones that we sold to the beer drivers, the beer distributors. They used to buy the books, from me, from my husband, not from me. And, the whiskey distributors, and they used to buy the books from us and that's how we sold tickets and a few other people that we sold to. And my daughter came out second. That other girl won by very little, and my daughter gave some tickets to my son, he worked for the state for, if he could sell some for her, and he tried and they said, "we already bought tickets, some girl came over here saying that she was your sister and she was selling tickets and I bought, one of them bought a book from them." And Paolo said, "she wasn't my sister, this is my sister." "Dude we already have the tickets."

Rosana: Ok, so what was El Centro Mexicano trying to raise funds for?

Sra. Aguilar: Well you see for years and years, this is as I have heard it. I'm not sure of the whole thing, but for years and years, since before the war, people were wanting to build a place, have a place where they could meet for social activities. There weren't too many Mexican peoples here in Sacramento when we got here. When I got here and when my mother and father.

Rosana: What year was that?

Sra. Aguilar: When my mother and father got here it was in 39. My aunt got here, my Aunt Lola, got here in 24. And there wasn't too many Mexican people here in Sacramento. Mostly were Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese. And, they wanted to get a place where they could meet for social activities. So a man, that, Mr. Anyla. I don't know whether you know him. Augustin Anilla, he has a tortilla place on Broadway. Him and some other man bought this lot on 6th and W, I think, 6th and W. So, when, he said they could build something up, but they never could get the money to get the building started. So when El Consul Mexicano, what was his name?

Rosana: Dominguez?

Sra. Aguilar: Dominguez, that's right. When El Consul Mexicano Dominguez and his wife, came to Sacramento, they were the ones that started everything for El Centro Mexicano. Didn't I tell you about that the other day?

Rosana: You can tell me again.

Sra. Aguilar: All right. They started everything. They started selling shares, they got people you know that got interested to selling shares to all the people. And as they didn't know us very well, they never came to us. They started selling shares to all the people and someone would buy \$5.00 shares. People didn't have too much money. \$5.00 shares, \$10.00 shares. But, this Mr. Anilla, Augustin Anilla, Gomez, I don't know his first name, Gomez, and Elisa knows his first name. And Mendoza and Salazar, those four bought the biggest amount of shares, they put a lot of money in shares. They were contractors for the, they contracted the Nationals, you know to get the Nationals to work in the fields during the war. They contracted them and brought them here and they made a lot of money, and became rich.

Rosana: Mexican Nationals?

Sra. Aguilar: Mexican Nationals. They made a lot of money doing that during the war. So they put in the most money and then other people just put \$5, \$10, \$15, or some \$25, like that. And they got the money together to at least start the building. And they started the building, El Centro Mexicano, with, by Mr. Dominquez and Mrs. Dominquez, Mrs. Dominquez sang in places to raise funds. And she was the Mexican Consul's wife. You know they act real uppity in Mexico, when they do that, but she didn't, she was a wonderful woman.

Rosana: Como se habar?

Sra. Aguilar: I don't remember any more.

Rosana: That's ok.

Sra. Aguilar: And his, her, their daughter, she mixed up with all the, she was a very good friend of my daughter of Alma. And Carmen, the one that is president of our *supercelas*, his daughter. She was a very good daughter to the, I mean friend to them, their daughter. And then, when they opened up ooh, El Centro Mexicano opened up with a big fanfare, what do you call it. Ooh, it was like –

Rosana: What year was that?

Sra. Aguilar: Let me see what year was that? I really, I think it was somewhere around the early fifties. I think, late forties, or early fifties. Somewhere around there, I don't remember exactly the year. I don't know if Mr. Gonsalves remembers that either. Because I don't know if he took part. He used to be a contractor also, for field workers. Mr. Gonsalves, I mean Mr. Dominguez. And uh, and they opened up and they had, oh they had, Mrs. Dominguez, fixed the place a room with a lot of books, for young people to gather there. And for them to have books to read, good books to read. And then games to play for young people. For young people something to do there in the center. Games to play, and books to read and they had put a piano for those that wanted to play piano. A lot of the real, a real educational corner right there in the center for young people. And then they would plan dances, and things like that for the young people. It was very nice. Then they put a little, built another small building on the outside and put a restaurant there and it was, everything went real good. They were raising the money and

making the payments, they had to get a mortgage you know and do things to make the payments on this mortgage. They put de Morales, this organization, in charge of El Centro. I hate to put, I hate to say what I'm going to say on the tape.

Rosana: That's ok. If you don't mind I don't mind.

Sra. Aguilar: Well they put de Morales in charge of El Centro. Anyway, Mr. Dominquez was changed, was sent to another district and they sent another Consul de Mexicano here and that Consul, he didn't take the interest in the Mexican people, like Mr. Dominquez did. So, the thing was start going down, and they make things for the young people and the older people didn't bother to do things so, the festivities or activities for the younger people, and the thing started going down and down and down. First thing you know, the center was all, the windows were all broken, the chairs were all broken, the water fountain that Anilla had put out in the building, it was a water fountain of all the tile, and the Virgin Guadalupe was there. All of that tile was broken. Everything. Oh it was, and the monument that's now at the Capital Park was placed there are El Centro Mexicano by the Madres el Mexicanas. You see at that one corner of the property, was the monument was placed there, and a fence was put around [hard to hear] around it like that and it was kept real pretty as long as Mr. Dominquez and Mrs. Dominquez were here. It was real nice and on the 7 December there was a ceremony said and the veterans organization came and blow taps on there and everything was very nice. But afterwards, the just become this lazy, I told you about Mrs. Andesola. They just, they disbanded the organization the Las Madres, and everything was abandoned and everything. The monument with weeds up this high and all of the center was weeds all over and oh it was just gone to pot. And then they elected the

Morales, the Morales elected Alec, the one that is president of our organization. Alejandro de Condela. They elected him president of the Morales. So he got busy, he put new windows on the building, he bought new chairs for the center, and he fixed the library room again and the kitchen he fixed it up, he painted it and everything, he uh fixed the whole building, cleaned it up and he bought insurance for the building, fire insurance and for accident insurance they didn't have nothing like that. He bought, he paid the taxes, they were behind, I don't now how many years. He paid the taxes with the activities, they were the ones that asked my husband if they would let my daughter run for, to be a queen. Alec and Rosa Condela. So my husband said "because it's you, she can," that was the first time that we took any part in the center. So she went to take part to run for queen. And with that money that they got, that they made from that activity, he did all of this to El Centro. And they would, they would used to sell beer there. And see every year you have to renew a license with the federal government, not a license, a stamp with the federal government in order to continue to sell the beer. Well this hadn't been paid for I don't know how many, for how long. So, Al went and took care of it. And he had that place going real nice again. Real nice, and started you know being active, and people going and having, having fun there, there are people, the Mexican people had a real nice place to go and especially the young people had a real nice place to go to when Alec was president. But then his term was up and someone else was elected president. And here goes everything to pot again. Nothing was done. See they couldn't, they didn't have the money to pay for this, they didn't have the money to pay for that, they didn't have the money to pay the water, nothing! It went to pot. And it was like that for I forgot how long, for years. It was like that. And finally they were about to lose the center because they hadn't been, making the payments on the mortgage, so the men that had the biggest shares, the biggest share holders, they got together and they went over

there and paid up the mortgage and they paid the taxes that hadn't been paid and took care of everything. And then they went to court. That they wanted this place put over to their name, change over to their name, that they wanted to take it over. Because the people they were only making activities, getting the money, and not doing anything for the upkeep of the property. So they said they wanted to turn it over to their name. And they did. The court awarded the property to these four men. So these four men decided to sell the place, so they could each one get their money out of it. So they decided to sell it, but before they did that, they wrote, sent a letter to Lupe Fernandez, who was the organizer of the American-Mexican War Mothers. They sold a letter to, sent a letter to her, telling her that they were going, they were planning to sell the property and that they wanted her, our organization, the American-Mexican War Mothers to have the monument. See? So my commander brought it to, Lupe Fernandez brought it to the meeting and asked, do you want, do you think we should accept the monument? We will have trouble with Andesola if we do. I said "Well they're giving it to us, why should we have trouble with Andesola if we do? They haven't taken care of it, they have abandoned it there. I think we should accept it." And we accepted the monument.

Rosana: Now let's back track and can you give me some background on the Madres Mexicanas? The group that preceded the American-Mexican War Mothers.

Sra. Aguilar: Yes.

Rosana: When did the Mothers Mexicana begin?

Sra. Aguilar: Oh they began right around to, I'm not sure exactly if it was before the war ended or right after the war ended. 1946-47 somewhere around there. I would ask my aunt, but she won't remember, she's 87 years and she can't remember a lot of things anymore.

Rosana: Uh Huh. So, what was their purpose?

Sra. Aguilar: Huh?

Rosana: Tell me about the purpose, the objectives of the Madres Mexicanas.

Sra. Aguilar: Well the same as, well, I really don't know what their objective was, but they used to go to the USO and serve the GIs, especially the Mexican boys that would go to the USO. They'd take, and we used to do the same thing, take Mexican food like aroze, frijoles, tamales, enchiladas, chicana, and things like that, and feed them. But not only, the Mexican boys, but the Anglo boys too, they used to love the food. And they'd take that food over there, and whenever they'd bring a GI from overseas, you know, dead, they would stand guard at their, and we do the same thing, at their, at the casket, you know, and when he was going to be buried, they would stand guard. And I don't know what else they did, but that's, we do those things also.

Rosana: Uh huh. And when did um, I take it, it was their idea to have a monument made?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes. They were the ones that had the idea, that was Senora Andesola. To have a monument made and put it there at the Mexican Center.

Rosana: Uh huh. Now was Senora Andesola the founder of the Madres de Mexicanas?

Sra. Aguilar: Uh huh, yes, she was a very, um, active woman in organizations and she was oh, the Senora muy, and the whole nine, [hard to hear] , but you know, she would I guess be called, that's the only kind of people that are active and or organizes and things like that because she's dead now Florisetta. Esta pero, she was, she would get mad very easy.

Rosana: Now about the statute, um, I heard something about the statute itself coming from Italy?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes.

Rosana: Do you know anything about that?

Sra. Aguilar: No, my aunt was the one that knows, I guess she's the one, but there's where they had it made, in Italy, and they brought it here. It cost them an awful lot of money. And they raised that money just by dances, and selling Mexican food, tacos, enchiladas, and all of that. Oh, they worked hard, my Aunt Lola was one of them. I used to have, the, you know these furnaces you used for the enchila—, to make the barbecue out in the backyards. She had one of those and she would take it to these places and she would make her enchiladas and her tacos and everything on these things, wherever they go to make a festivity you know. To sell, uh to raise funds for that.

Rosana: Where there any usual places where they would go?

Sra. Aguilar: Well El Centro Mexicana was most, one of the most, one of the ones that they go mostly, and then the little towns close around here were they could, where it wasn't hard for them to get to.

Rosana: Uh huh.

Sra. Aguilar: Because they were kind of, uh, you know, women [hard to hear]

Rosana: But how many women were in that group?

Sra. Aguilar: I don't know, but it was quite a big group. I didn't know anything. The only thing I knew about them was when they would invite my husband on the 7th of December, that they would pay tribute to the monument there, they would invite my husband to go play taps.

Rosana: Oh.

Sra. Aguilar: And I would go with my husband.

Rosana: Oh, and that's how you got in that photograph of them?

Sra. Aguilar: That photograph, yeah, that's how we got in there. Because he played taps on the 7th of December, which was the attack at Pearl Harbor.

Rosana: Uh huh. But when that photograph was taken, um, were you a member of the Mothers Mexicanas?

Sra. Aguilar: No.

Rosana: Was there a membership fee that the Madres paid?

Sra. Aguilar: Yes, I think they paid 50 cents a month or a dollar a month. Now, the fees are \$5.

Rosana: And so what happened, was there any specific event that caused the Madres Mexicanas to dissolve?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, I don't know, there was some misunderstanding and Mrs. Andesola got angry and she just got angry and threw everything and said "that she was quitting. There is everything and I am quitting." And all of the others followed her. Mrs. Fernandez was the only one, that didn't.

Rosana: Uh huh. That is Lupe Fernandez?

Sra. Aguilar: Uh huh, Lupe Fernandez.

Rosana: And so when did, when did the American-Mexican War Mothers start up?

Sra. Aguilar: That's what I wanted to get from Elisa, but it was, I think it was in 1973, I think 1973.

Rosana: And what caused, uh –

Sra. Aguilar: 72 or 73, somewhere around there.

Rosana: What caused a rejuvenation of this group?

Sra. Aguilar: Of the American-Mexican War Mothers? Well when Mrs. Andesola gave up, she threw everything, she said “she didn’t want to have nothing to do” and everybody else quit. Then Mrs. Fernandez, Lupe Fernandez, asked Andesola, said “Do you mind if I take up where you left off, and organize and continue with the organization?” And Andesola said “No, I don’t mind, do whatever you want to do.” She said. So Mrs. Fernandez, she took her secretary, the woman that she had chosen to be secretary and somebody else, I don’t know, and she went to the state to notify, that Mrs. Andesola wasn’t in charge of that organization anymore. Now she was going to be the head and she wanted all the all notices, mail or notices in regards to the state or anything to be mailed to her, to her address. And they started looking for the organization’s name and the man asked “what did you say the name of the organization was?” And she said “Mothers Mexicanas.” And he said “well we don’t find anyone by that name in our books.”

And then she said, "well how about Mexican-American Mothers?" Because they would call themselves that later on. Mexican-American Mothers.

Rosana: Uh huh.

Sra. Aguilar: He looked and he said "no, I can't find that either." [hard to hear] talked to this women, "well I can't find it, what can I do?" Well she thought, and said "Well I guess I will start my own organization." She told the man "Is it possible for me to start my own organization?" He said "no, you can start your own organization, what name do you want to use?" So she talked to these other women and then, they felt that they couldn't use Mexican-American War Mothers because Anna Jacqueta had used that name. See so then Lupe Fernandez said "we'll just reverse it, we'll

[Tape three, side two ends]

[Tape four begins]

Guadalupe Aguilar is the informant. Rosana Madrid is the interviewer. This was done on January 25, 1984, in Sacramento, for the Ethnic Community Survey of the Sacramento History Center. The interview is in English with some Spanish and this is tape four of a four part series with Guadalupe Aguilar.

Sra. Aguilar: And that's how the organization started, they gave her the form to fill out, you know, in order to be registered, and she brought it home and had her son fill it out for her and fill it out and then she took it out and then she took it back to the Department of State and they registered there. She did all the things that had to be done to register this, to register a nonprofit organization. She did everything according to the law. She was a sharp woman, very intelligent. She didn't speak English or read or write English, but Spanish she did. She was very well educated in Spanish, but her sons were educated in English. One of them is an officer for the Bank of California, an officer or something, he works for the Bank of California.

Rosana: So what did this new group do? What did the American-Mexican War Mothers do?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, we did almost the same as the as the Madras Mexicanas. When the USO was still on, we used to go to the USO once a month, and we used to serve dinners there for the GIs. We used to entertain the GIs, in other words, the Madras Mexicanas and at other times there were other groups that used to go entertain the GIs. See, and we used to take some, sometimes we'd bring someone, some entertainment, like a girl singing or a boy sing, or a man singing or something to entertain the GIs and we would feed them. See, we'd cook a Mexican dinner and serve Mexican dinners. And uh, and then we drew guard for GIs that were going to be buried, and we'd send a wreath to these guards. We are affiliated with, that's one, I don't think the Madras Mexicanas were affiliated, I'm not sure. But we are affiliated with a, the Veterans Affiliated Council. And anything that they, any activities of theirs, we take part in it. Like every year they have, give a dinner to raise funds for the Old Soldier's Home, the Old Soldier's Home [Veterans Home in Yountville, California] we take part in this in helping them

to sell the tickets or to do, well we never have done any of the cooking, but it you know, we might have to do it sometime in the future. But we sell a lot of tickets. And uh, and so we help them in whatever way we can for this dinner. And then we uh, you know the ones, the firing squad and the ones that played taps when a veteran or a soldier is buried, well then he is given a military burial, well we every, once a year we also have a dinner there at the Veterans Affiliated Council to raise funds to buy their uniforms and anything that they need for these men. And we take part in all of that. We take part in all of those activities. The American-Mexican War Mothers. We take part in the parades, we take part in things like yesterday –

Rosana: Like what, describe that to me what happened yesterday.

Sra. Aguilar: Not yesterday, Monday.

Rosana: Monday.

Sra. Aguilar: Well we were called to be present. They uh, all the veterans, all the veterans from World War I, through all the wars that won a Congressional Medal of Honor were presented with a, with the license plates from the State of California, Monday. They were honored there in front of the Capitol. And I thought that was a very nice gesture, to give to the veterans. Oh, there was people from all over, from Monterey, from they were Marines and Sailors from San Diego, and oh they were from all over. There was, Jimmy Doolittle was there, and one of those veterans came and hugged us, because we were taking part.

Rosana: Now, the American-Mexican War Mothers took part in what way? What did they do?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, we stood behind with our colors. We had our colors, the American Flag and the Bear Flag, the California Flag. With our colors, we marched in, right behind the colors of the Marines, and we marched in and they told us where to go and we stood on the steps of the Capitol, right behind where the veterans were sitting. I was looking for the paper to show it to you. When you came in do you remember that I was looking? But I couldn't find it. Can I have?

Rosana: I'll cut it out later, that's ok. I saw the picture.

Sra. Aguilar: You see the Marines were standing right here, all the servicemen, I mean not only the Marines, the colors of the different parts of the military service, the Marines, the Navy, and the Army, and what else, and the Air Force were standing, all the colors were standing like that and we were standing right below them and the Auxiliary Women from the Marines, the Auxiliary Women were standing right next to us.

Rosana: Now tell –

Sra. Aguilar: But we're the only group that were there and these two Auxiliary Women from the Marines.

Rosana: Now you said that the American-Mexican War Mothers started up in about 73?

Sra. Aguilar: Somewheres around there, I don't remember exactly. I would have to find out from Elisa. She has the papers over there.

Rosana: I was going to ask, what about when Viet Nam was happening, with the Viet Nam war and were there any special recognitions given to the Mexican boys who fought in Viet Nam?

Sra. Aguilar: No, only soldiers that were coming, we used to do and they called us with this, we used to do guard for them. What, you see when we do guard for them we go, they have a rosary, if they don't have a rosary, well we don't go. But if they have a rosary, we go to the rosary, and then each two mothers stand on each side of the, of the casket, and do guard, and then they stand there about ten minutes or something like that. But, the President, she is the one that takes care of that, and then she gets two more to go take their place and those two come and sit down. We do guard like that, and then next day when the funeral we go to the church or wherever they are going to have the services and we go and each two mothers stand at the end of the casket, like this, you know, and then when they bring in the casket into the church, we stand in a line. When, which of the number of mothers that goes sometimes some are working and can't go, so what the ones that can go, if it's six, three of us stand here and three of us stand here. You see, and then when they bring the casket out, also, three of us stand here and three of us stand here, and they take the casket out into the hearse, and over at the cemetery, the same thing.

Rosana: Uh, do you think that there was any uh, conflict between say patriotism for the United States and patriotism toward Mexico?

Sra. Aguilar: There was any what?

Rosana: Conflict.

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, I heard.

Rosana: For the women who were Mexican, the American-Mexican War Mothers. Uh, if they happened to have a personal conflict or a political conflict with uh, with sons having fought for the United States and yet being of Mexican descent?

Sra. Aguilar: No, I don't think so, I never did know of any. Some of the mothers were glad, well you know, they were, they were worried and concerned about their sons' return and safety and all of that, but they were proud to be able to, to be able to, that their sons were going to serve their country. A lot of women I heard them say this. Of course they were concerned about their sons' safety, but they were proud, that they were able to fight for their country.

Rosana: And during Viet Nam, when there was a lot of opposition to –

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, there was a lot of opposition because they felt that they didn't have no business over there. I even think, I say myself, we don't have any business to go and help, these people way out there, they don't, I don't know. But, but, they say that we have to help our fellow man, well yes I guess so, but my goodness, a young man can't even plan for his future

anymore. Because every little thing that goes wrong in Europe and in Asia and everything, here goes the American young men to defend them, and then they never come back. I, I can't see, I feel this, I feel this, I feel this, I was with Carter. He was taking care of the people here, that there was not any hungry, that there were jobs and things, he was taking care of his people here, and at the same time he was building his military, he was building his military might. In case they would be coming close to us, be ready to attack. Like if they were coming into like, like Kennedy did when they start coming into Cuba. When Russian start bringing those airplanes into Cuba. Kennedy told them get out of Cuba immediately and what did they do? They got out didn't they? Because they know that we had the things to put them out. And if they come to South America or any of those places, I, we also should be ready to tell them to get away from there, they have no business on our continent. This is our continent, Europe, Asia, and all of those places is another continent. Let them fight there, they are always killing themselves. Let them fight there, our young men can't even plan for a future anymore. That's why they are doing the things that they doing the things that they are doing now, having fun and living it up, because anyway they are going to die young.

Rosana: Ok, let's go back. Tell me, what eventually happened to the statue that the Mothers Mexicanas had erected?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, when these men wrote this letter to Mrs. Fernandez, that they were giving us the statue, well she put it up to the members and they said they would accept it, it was accepted. And it went on like that for about two or three meetings, and then she told us, she told us, she was the secretary, she said "Mr. Anaya phoned me again and said that 'he wants us to get

the statue out of there as soon as possible because they are selling the place and they don't want to sell the, and they don't want the statute to be in the place when they make the transaction because then the people that will buy the place won't, might not let us get it out of there.'" And I told her "well that's right." I said "because everything that's on that property belongs to the people that buys the property." "And so," she said, "well I don't know what to do." And then I told her," I told her well, Mrs. Fernandez if the membership and you allow me, and give me the right, to look into this and see what we can do to move the statue, will you allow me? Will you give me permission?" And so she put it to a vote and they said "yes, for me to do whatever I thought it was necessary to move the statue." I said, "well I want to do this all on my own, I don't want no interference from anybody and I don't want to come and give a report until I am ready for the statue to be moved." And they said it was all right. So then, I told my Comadre, I said "Comadre I'm going to do my part over here, Lupe Fernandez, I'm going to do my part over here in finding someone to move the, someplace to move the statue, and you keep in touch with Anaya, telling him what we, what we are doing." So that's how we worked, her and I. Just her and I. And I called my son, Paolo, and I told him. So he said, "well Mama," he said, "where do you want to move the statue?" I said "well I'd like to move it to the, to the Capitol grounds if I could." And he said, "well I don't know, but I'll see what I can do for you." And so, he spoke to Sieberg, Mr. Sieberg, the Assemblyman. I don't think you knew him. The Assemblyman, he was a very nice person. And he spoke to Sieberg, and then Mr. Sieberg, Reagan was Governor of California at the time, and so Mr. Sieberg talked to, talked to the man that took care of the Parks, to see if he could move the statue. And this is the letter he sent me.

Rosana: And this letter basically says what?

Sra. Aguilar: Well look, read it there.

Rosana: [reading letter]:

This is in reply to your inquiry pertaining to the relocation of the Mexican War Mother statue to a state facility. Assemblyman Sieberg mentioned that possibly the Department of Parks and Recreation could suggest a State Park facility where this statue would be appropriate. Please contact Mr. William Mott. I'd be pleased to provide further information if you so desired. Sincerely, Dan Johnson, Landscape Architect, From the Department of General Services, State of California.

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, he didn't give us, we couldn't move it to the State Capitol. Because it was, I called him afterwards and talked to him on the phone, and he said it was a policy of the state not to accept any more statues in the, on the grounds, so I got a hold of that man that he told me and I made different, and he gave me another telephone number, and I called the other telephone number, and he gave me another telephone number, and I called another telephone number, and none of those places were suitable to us. And so, they even suggested that place in Los Angeles, La Via de something, that street, that has Spanish things stores, Mexican things, Calle de Olivera in Los Angeles, and they suggested that. I told them "we don't want it in Los Angeles, we want it right here in Sacramento. And this is an effort and a sacrifice that was made by Mexican Mothers here in Sacramento," I told him. And anyway, so then I, I told my son and he said, my son said, "why don't you talk to Woods, he's the head of the County Service Office." I know who he is. I'll talk to him. So when we went to the, when I went to veterans, to the meeting of the veterans, because we go every first Friday of the month, to the meeting of the Veterans

Affiliated Council. We had two women from our organization, to go to that meeting. And when I went I had a, not Mr. Woods, but his aide, happened to be there so I talked to him. And he said, "I'll tell Woods about it," he said "why don't you come to the, why don't you give him a call" he said. So I did, I gave him a call, and I talked to Mr. Woods. I think this is the letter I sent to Mr. Woods. I'm not very sure.

Rosana: Just so that I don't have to read out of this, basically what does this say, do you remember?

Sra. Aguilar. Well, he accepts to help us to change, move the monument. Mr. Woods from the County Service Office, and their the ones that take care of making, you know, giving veterans a military funeral. And it was accepted, it was accepted and it was already to be moved to the, to the military cemetery that's on Fruitridge Road. There's a military, I mean a cemetery out on Fruitridge

Rosana: It's not a military cemetery?

Sra. Aguilar: That's were they bury all the soldiers, you know all veterans, soldiers. All soldiers, they might not have to be veterans. And I, this is not the one that I had that was approved by the, by the Supervisors. But this is the letter that was approved, that it was approved to be moved. And I got the letter that where the County Supervisors, the seal and everything. All of the Supervisors, and everything. Ready to be moved. And I told my son, "well I got Mr. Woods to do that for me. They are going to move the statue to the military

cemetery on Fruitridge Road.” And he took us and showed us the place where they are going to put the statue and I think that’s the proper place for it. And it’s just the right place for it. And, so, and I said “but the thing is we hadn’t paid for moving it and now what are we going to do, we don’t have enough money to move.” He said, my son said “I’ll take care of that, I’ll talk to Mr. what’s his name, that construction outfit, Fletcher or Thatcher or something like that. I’ll talk to him and I’m pretty sure he will do it for you. They can do these things in order to take a cut in the taxes.” I said, “all right,” so he got that man to he was going to move that for us, to the cemetery over there. So when we had the meeting I took it to the meeting and I told them. I ask, you know, I asked permission to talk, and then I told them, “well we are ready to move the statue. It is going to be moved to the military cemetery way out on Fruitridge Road, because the President had all ready to, she went over there with Mr. Woods to see the place and everything.” And a lot of people were fighting that they were fighting this man, that they didn’t want them to keep El Centro de Mexicano, and they didn’t want the statue to be moved. Mrs. Andesola and her daughter was one of them. But they didn’t do nothing about cleaning it up or paying the taxes or do nothing, you see. And the court, and they couldn’t do nothing because the court had already awarded the property to these men. And so, so I took it and I told the men we are ready to move the statue and uh this contractor, building contractor, is going to help us move it. And we had the place and everything is approved already. Now, he will let us know when it is going to move and we have to plan about having a day, setting a date for the unveiling of the statue. And everything, oh everything was set and done. Oh I was tickled pink, because I had accomplished this. I used to pray and, and I was tickled pink. The following morning after the meeting, Mr. Woods calls me and says “Mrs. Aguilar, I am sorry, but I cannot move the statue to the county cemetery that we have offered the military.” He said “where we offered to have the

statue to.” I said you’re not, why? Will you tell me, please tell me why? I got mad. And he said “well Mrs., I forget what her daughter’s name is, she called us and, she called me and she told me that if I put my hands on that statue the county is going to be sued. So I can’t afford to put the county in that kind of a situation. That it will be sued by these people”. And I asked him, “why, why will she sue the county?” [Mr Woods] “Because she says that that’s, that statue that monument belongs to the Mother’s Mexicanas.” [Sra Aguilar] “And that’s not true, and that’s not true. I can take you the paper that where it was given to us.” [coughing] and asks: we don’t want to put that away? [meaning the tape recorder]

Rosana: It’s ok.

Sra. Aguilar: “And it was given to us” I said, “by the owner’s of the property. It was given to us, I have the papers, I’ll take them and show them to you.” And I took the papers and showed them to him, but he wouldn’t accept them. I was so disappointed, oh I even cried! And I, went back to them, somebody in the meeting called this woman and told her.

Rosana: So what happened?

Sra. Aguilar: So then, I was so disappointed and I didn’t know what to do then, Reagan was still in office and I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know, and then, well it stayed like that, I start praying, praying and asking God to guide me and to show me the way. So I kind of eased up you know, in my disappointment and I start feeling a little better and I kind of forgot about it. And then uh, Anaya called my Comadre again. And she told me again, and I said “I, I don’t

know where to take it to now. I said, what monument unless we take it to Fort Sutter.” And she said “no, no, we don’t want to go to Fort Sutter.” And I said, “well let’s wait, the elections are coming up, let’s wait a little while, tell Anaya to hold it back, because they were in a hurry to sell the property.” I said “tell him to hold up the selling of the property for a little while, we will wait for the elections to come around.” So the elections came around and Jerry Brown won, became the Governor of California. And I said well this is the time for me to go over there and ask Jerry Brown, but you know how it takes time for them to get settled in and all of that, so I was waiting for all of this to die down and then I was going to go up there. By this time, the Deciseis de Septiembre comes around and some of the guys that were in the General Service Office, they were Mexicans and they were trying to get to see if Deciseis de Septiembre could be celebrate it right in the Capitol. Because this was land that belonged to Spain, to the Mexican people at one time and they were trying to celebrate Deciseis de Septiembre there. And then, this woman Andesola went over there before I did, went over there and told them if they could move the monument. She found out that I wanted to move the monument to the Capitol before, if they could move the monument to the Capitol. So they said yes! Yes! They could move the monument to the Capitol. So they were getting all ready to move the monument to the Capitol when someone calls me and tells me, “Lupe, I thought you were going to move the monument to the military cemetery.” I said, “yes, but they wouldn’t let us.” And he said “Andesola is going to have it moved to the Capitol.” I said “Andesola?” He said “yes.” Well Andesola doesn’t have no right to move it. And so, he said, “well they are having a meeting today at the State Capitol at the General Service Building and talking about it.” I said, “ok.” So I got ready, I got ready and I went over there to the General Service Building, and Andesola and her daughter were there. And they don’t know me too well because I never take any active part in their organization or any of

those things at that time. My husband was living and he wouldn't let me. See I had [in Spanish]. And so, but I knew them because my Aunt Lola, and they were there. And they had newspapermen and they had cameras, and they had everything there. And there was this young man from General Service talking to these men what their plans were to make the festivitas there in the state in the park, Capitol Park. And that they were going to move this monument, the monument dedicated to the Mexican American soldier they were going to move it here to the Capitol. And they were going to do this and they were going to do that. And I didn't say nothing, I just sat there and listened, and they were going to do here, and they were going to this. Then when he got through talking and that he told them, you know that he got through talking, then I got up and said "mister can I talk?" And he said, "yeah, yeah, you can talk." I said ok. I told, I asked him. "What right do you have to move the monument from the Mexican center to the Capitol?" Well he said "well Mrs. Andesola owns the monument and she gave us the right to move it." So I told him "Mrs. Andesola does not own the monument. The American-Mexican War Mothers own the monument and as long as we don't give permission to, for that monument to be moved, it can't be moved." So the man was, he said "can I talk to you after this meeting?" I said "you certainly can." And that was all. After that he came and talked to me. He came and talked to me in the hall. And I told him, I said "I have tried to bring that monument here, I talked to Reagan, but he wouldn't let me. But I was thinking of coming now that Jerry Brown is governor, I want, I was thinking of coming to see if I could make it here, but this lady beat me to the punch, but she's not the owner, I can bring you the papers where we are owners." And I explained to him why. And so, he believed it.

Rosana: And so, then you had the, you had the full go ahead to move the statue there?

Sra. Aguilar: The statue there. We went through everything in order to move the statue there. They moved it themselves. We just, we gave the paper to the state. We signed papers, you know papers of conveyance to the state of the statue. We signed them. Mrs., I don't know that this is the paper.

Rosana: That's ok, we'll find the papers right now. So, are –

Sra. Aguilar: Yeah, this is the paper of conveyance of the statue to the state. And we signed it, Lupe Fernandez, Rosa Condela who was the president, and myself, the treasurer. But I was the one that did every, that did all of the transactions of that monument, and mostly through the

[Tape four, side one ends]

[Tape four, side two begins]

Sra. Aguilar: . . . too sharp you know, they don't think and, she didn't think of it and I didn't think of it either. Elisa was our vice president, but she's too flighty.

Rosana: Can you tell me in, in general, let's see, you came here in 194 or 3

Sra. Aguilar: 42.

Rosana: And it's 83 now. In general, what would the changes be that you have seen in the Mexican community from the time you came to now?

Sra. Aguilar: Well, at the time that I came, Sacramento was a very small city. A very small community. And there weren't too many Mexican people here.

Rosana: When did they start coming?

Sra. Aguilar: Uh?

Rosana: When did they start coming?

Sra. Aguilar: During the war, first these Nationals start coming in to help here, to work here. The first Nationals that came in they were educated people from Mexico. They couldn't work on the fields. Some of them were newspaper men. And they couldn't work in the fields. My father brought some of them to eat over here at our home, we were living on C Street, and he found them, I don't know where my father met them, he was always a man that carried everybody home. And, I don't know where he met them and brought them home. Well they sent them back to Mexico and brought, you know, the pune kind, the Punes that's what they call them in Mexico now. And, working people, that's what they brought later on. And those did good, they did very good. On the fields. It was then when they start coming, some of those married girls that lived here, were born and raised here and they became American citizens. You should see some of them, they became American citizens, they learned how to speak English, they speak good

English, they had good chefs. One of them that I know of is a good, what do you call that? Mater de at the Sacramento Inn, I think. His name is [hard to hear] but I can't remember his first name now. And, and they raised their children, their children were born here, so they raised them to speak English. They have done better with their children than those of us who have been born and raised here. Yeah. Some of them that came from Mexico during the war. They came legally and there was a lot of them that came illegally, but still they married to Mexican girls from here and then the girls had to go back to Mexico with them and they had to try to, those girls had to do, over there in Mexico make arrangements so that they could come in legally. And live here permanently. And that's when a lot of Mexican people start coming from Mexico.

During the war.

Rosana: But how did it change the complexion of Sacramento's Mexican community?

Sra. Aguilar: Well I really couldn't tell you because I lived mostly among Italian and Italian community and here, we were the only Mexican family here. Well no, Betty Vasquez? The one that comes out on the, she lives around the corner on that little circle. She lives there. She hasn't been living there too long though, a couple of, about three or four years. But we have been living here twenty years already. Twenty-one years.

Rosana: What is the name of this area here?

Sra. Aguilar: East Sacramento.

Rosana: This is East Sacramento.

Sra. Aguilar: Old, old, old Sacramento families live in this area. Those big homes around there, that's them. And this house is over, Mr. [hard to hear] was telling us that they lived there over fifty years and this house was already here. It is an old, old house, this house. She said it was only that part over there. And this part here was added afterwards. When I moved here, this room, was, had a cement floor, and these cement blocks, you know, these blocks like that, that's what those walls are made of, but I had a wood floor put on it because I can't stand a cement wall. I put a wood floor put in it and I had some of this what do you call this boards that put on? Plasterboards! And I had insulation put in between the plasterboard and the cement blocks to insulate it on that wall and this wall. These I left just as they were, they were brick, these here. And, but he says this house is older than fifty years. That part over there, it's older than fifty years. But, so I don't know how that but there were a lot of Mexican people, but you know the Mexican people that came from over there, they're kind of como [in Spanish]. Don't you feel that way?

Rosana: Well

Sra. Aguilar: Well, once awhile ago, I go to Guadalupe Church, and, I can never, I never find anybody that is a little friendly. I don't know too many people at Guadalupe Church. My neighbors, that used to be my neighbors, they had moved way out in Gardenland or way out in North Sacramento. So they go to those churches over there. And all the ones that go to Guadalupe Church, most of the ones that go to Guadalupe Church are people that came from

Mexico. And have settled in that part right there. That's where they have settled. Most of the Mexican people that came from Mexico. They are on W Street, T Street, that part right there and there are a lot of Italian, Chinese, and Japanese around there too. But over here, where we live, we had Italians living on this side, Italians living on this side, and Italians living in the back of us. We only had my aunt living on the other side of 12th Street, on D or C Street. But on the other side of 12, we lived on this side of 12, and she lived on that side of 12. And then all the rest that was over there, Italians, we were the only Mexicans around here. And we have, in San Antonio, the same thing, we always lived amongst, other nationalities we never, over there in San Antonio, the west side is the Mexican side, and we never did live in that part of town. We owned, we lived for years and years, when you are born and raised right there in the same place my father bought when he got married.

Rosana: Ok, let me –

Sra. Aguilar: When Father Kenny was alive I used to go to Guadalupe Church, once in a while. On account of him. And, because when Father Kenny was in the I think, I don't know whether he was in the Marines or the Merchant Marines. He was an officer in one of those groups. And when he came out he didn't know what to do with himself, so he went to the seminary, well he wanted to become a priest. And he went to the seminary, he entered the seminary and became a priest. He became a priest already in late years. You know, he wasn't a very young man when he became a priest. And when he was ordained, we received an invitation to come to his ordination at the Cathedral, because his brother, Tom, and my son, Paolo attended college together and they were good, very good friends in college. My son was President of the

Newman Club, there at the college. And, and then my husband belonged to the musician's union and Tom, belonged to the musician's union. And, their father had a janitorial supply business. And we bought our supplies from him, my husband bought the supplies from him for the beer, in the beer tavern that he had. And that's how come we knew them. We were [hard to hear] they were Catholics and we were Catholics and like that you know. And, so when he was ordained, when Father Kenny was ordained, he gave us an invitation to go to his ordination. And after the ordination they had a reception in their home, so we went to the ord, to the reception my husband and I, went to the reception, and we were one of the couples that he gave his first blessing to. Father Kenny. So we have always been close to Father Kenny, it was, at one time I was very, I was very depressed. Like I had never been in my life. Well I was very depressed when my husband died and when he was very sick at one time. But this time with my children I had never had any problems or never had been depressed with any of my children. But this time with my oldest son whom I think the world of, I thank the Lord for all of my children, but my oldest son, but he, him and, oh I hope this doesn't go on the

Rosana: If you don't want it to, I can turn it off.

[tape 4, side 2 ends, end of interview with Sra. Aguilar]